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“ The Yellow Dwarf ”

By Max Beerbohm

The Happy Hypocrite

By Max Beerbohm

NONE, it is said, of all who revelled with the Regent, was half so wicked as Lord George Hell. I will not trouble my little readers with a long recital of his great naughtiness. But it were well they should know that he was greedy, destructive, and disobedient. I am afraid there is no doubt that he often sat up at Carlton House until long after bed-time, playing at games, and that he generally ate and drank far more than was good for him. His fondness for fine clothes was such, that he used to dress on week-days quite as gorgeously as good people dress on Sundays. He was thirty-five years old and a great grief to his parents.

And the worst of it was that he set such a bad example to others. Never, never did he try to conceal his wrong-doing; so that, in time, every one knew how horrid he was. In fact, I think he was proud of being horrid. Captain Tarleton, in his account of *Contemporary Bucks* suggested that his lordship's great Candour was a virtue and should incline us to forgive some of his abominable faults. But, painful as it is to me to dissent from any opinion expressed by one who is now dead, I hold that Candour is good, only when it reveals good actions or good sentiments, and that, when it reveals evil, itself is evil, even also.

Lord

The Happy Hypocrite

Lord George Hell did, at last, atone for all his faults, in a way that was never revealed to the world during his life-time. The reason of his strange and sudden disappearance from that social sphere, in which he had so long moved and never moved again, I will unfold. My little readers will then, I think, acknowledge that any angry judgment they may have passed upon him must be reconsidered and, it may be, withdrawn. I will leave his lordship in their hands. But my plea for him will not be based upon that Candour of his, which some of his friends so much admired. There were, yes! some so weak and so wayward as to think it a fine thing to have an historic title and no scruples. "Here comes George Hell," they would say. "How wicked my lord is looking!" *Noblesse oblige*, you see, and so an aristocrat should be very careful of his good name. Anonymous naughtiness does little harm.

It is pleasant to record that many persons were unobnoxious to the magic of his title and disapproved of him so strongly that, whenever he entered a room where they happened to be, they would make straight for the door and watch him very severely through the key-hole. Every morning, when he strolled up Piccadilly, they crossed over to the other side in a compact body, leaving him to the companionship of his bad companions on that which is still called the "shady" side. Lord George—*σχέτλιος*—was quite indifferent to this demonstration. Indeed, he seemed wholly hardened, and, when ladies gathered up their skirts as they passed him, he would lightly appraise their ankles.

I am glad I never saw his lordship. They say he was rather like Caligula, with a dash of Sir John Falstaff, and that sometimes, on wintry mornings in St. James's Street, young children would hush their prattle and cling in disconsolate terror to their nurses' skirts, as they saw him come (that vast and fearful gentleman!) with the east wind ruffling the round surface of his beaver,
ruffling

ruffling the fur about his neck and wrists, and striking the purple complexion of his cheeks to a still deeper purple. "King Bogey" they called him in the nurseries. In the hours when they too were naughty, their nurses would predict his advent down the chimney or from the linen-press, and then they always "behaved." So that, you see, even the unrighteous are a power for good, in the hands of nurses.

It is true that his lordship was a non-smoker—a negative virtue, certainly, and due, even that, I fear, to the fashion of the day—but there the list of his good qualities comes to an abrupt conclusion. He loved with an insatiable love the Town and the pleasures of the Town, whilst the ennobling influences of our English lakes were quite unknown to him. He used to boast that he had not seen a buttercup for twenty years, and once he called the country "a Fool's Paradise." London was the only place marked on the map of his mind. London gave him all he wished for. Is it not extraordinary to think that he had never spent a happy day nor a day of any kind in Follard Chase, that desirable mansion in Herts., which he had won from Sir Follard Follard, by a chuck of the dice, at Boodle's, on his seventeenth birthday? Always cynical and unkind, he had refused to give the broken baronet his revenge. Always unkind and insolent, he had offered to instal him in the lodge—an offer which was, after a little hesitation, accepted. "On my soul, the man's place is a sinecure," Lord George would say, "he never has to open the gate to me." * So rust had covered the great iron gates of Follard Chase, and moss had covered its paths. The deer browsed upon its terraces. There were only wild flowers anywhere. Deep down among the weeds and water-lilies of the little stone-rimmed pond he had looked down upon, lay the marble faun, as he had fallen.

Of

* *Lord Coleraine's Correspondence*, page 101.

Of all the sins of his lordship's life, surely not one was more wanton than his neglect of Follard Chase. Some whispered (nor did he ever trouble to deny) that he had won it by foul means, by loaded dice. Indeed no card-player in St. James's cheated more persistently than he. As he was rich and had no wife and family to support, and as his luck was always capital, I can offer no excuse for his conduct. At Carlton House, in the presence of many bishops and cabinet ministers, he once dunned the Regent most arrogantly for 5000 guineas out of which he had cheated him some months before, and went so far as to declare that he would not leave the house till he got it; whereupon His Royal Highness, with that unfailing tact for which he was ever famous, invited him to stay there as a guest; which, in fact, Lord George did, for several months. After this, we can hardly be surprised when we read that he "seldom sat down to the fashionable game of Limbo with less than four, and sometimes with *as many as 7* aces up his sleeve."* We can only wonder that he was tolerated at all.

At Garble's, that nightly resort of titled rips and roysterers, he usually spent the early part of his evenings. Round the illuminated garden, with La Gambogi, the dancer, on his arm and a Bacchic retinue at his heels, he would amble leisurely, clad in Georgian costume, which was not then, of course, fancy dress, as it is now.† Now and again, in the midst of his noisy talk, he would crack a joke of the period, or break into a sentimental ballad, dance
a little

* *Contemporary Bucks*, vol. i. page 73.

† It would seem, however, that, on special occasions, his lordship indulged in odd costumes. "I have seen him," says Captain Tarleton (vol. i. p. 69), "attired as a French clown, as a sailor, or in the crimson hose of a Sicilian grandee—*peu beau spectacle*. He never disguised his face, whatever his costume, nevertheless."

a little, or pick a quarrel. When he tired of such fooling, he would proceed to his box in the tiny *al fresco* theatre and patronise the jugglers, pugilists, play-actors and whatever eccentric persons happened to be performing there.

The stars were splendid, and the moon as beautiful as a great camellia, one night in May, as his lordship laid his arms upon the cushioned ledge of his box and watched the antics of the Merry Dwarf, a little, curly-headed creature, whose *début* it was. Certainly, Garble had found a novelty. Lord George led the applause, and the Dwarf finished his frisking with a pretty song about lovers. Nor was this all. Feats of archery were to follow. In a moment, the Dwarf reappeared with a small, gilded bow in his hand and a quiverful of arrows slung at his shoulder. Hither and thither he shot these vibrant arrows, very precisely, several into the bark of the acacias that grew about the overt stage, several into the fluted columns of the boxes, two or three to the stars. The audience was delighted. "*Bravo! Bravo Saggitaro!*" murmured Lord George, in the language of La Gambogi, who was at his side. Finally, the waxen figure of a man was carried on by an assistant and propped against the trunk of a tree. A scarf was tied across the eyes of the Merry Dwarf, who stood in a remote corner of the stage. *Bravo* indeed! For the shaft had pierced the waxen figure through the heart, or just where the heart would have been, if the figure had been human, and not waxen.

Lord George called for port and champagne and beckoned the bowing homuncle to his box, that he might compliment him on his skill and pledge him in a bumper of the grape.

"On my soul, you have a genius for the bow," his lordship cried, with florid condescension. "Come and sit by me, but first

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first let me present you to my divine companion the Signora Gambogi—Virgo and Sagittarius, egad! You may have met on the Zodiac.”

“Indeed, I met the Signora many years ago,” the Dwarf replied, with a low bow. “But not on the Zodiac, and the Signora perhaps forgets me.”

At this speech the Signora flushed angrily, for she was indeed no longer young, and the Dwarf had a childish face. She thought he mocked her. Her eyes flashed. Lord George’s twinkled rather maliciously.

“Great is the experience of youth,” he laughed. “Pray, are you stricken with more than twenty summers?”

“With more than I can count,” said the Dwarf. “To the health of your lordship!” and he drained his long glass of wine. Lord George replenished it and asked by what means or miracle he had acquired his mastery of the bow.

“By long practice,” the little thing rejoined; “long practice on human creatures.” And he nodded his curls mysteriously.

“On my heart, you are a dangerous box-mate.”

“Your lordship were certainly a good target.”

Little liking this joke at his bulk, which really rivalled the Regent’s, Lord George turned brusquely in his chair and fixed his eyes upon the stage. This time it was the Gambogi who laughed.

A new operette, *The Fair Captive of Samarcand*, was being enacted, and the frequenters of Garble’s were all curious to behold the new *débutante*, Jenny Mere, who was said to be both pretty and talented. These predictions were surely fulfilled, when the captive peeped from the window of her wooden turret. She looked so pale under her blue turban. Her eyes were dark with fear. Her parted lips did not seem capable of speech. “Is it
that

that she is frightened of us?" the audience wondered. "Or or the flashing scimitar of Aphoschaz, the cruel father who holds her captive?" So they gave her loud applause, and when, at length, she jumped down, to be caught in the arms of her gallant lover, Nissarah, and, throwing aside her Eastern draperies, did a simple dance, in the convention of Columbine, their delight was quite unbounded. She was very young and did not dance very well, it is true, but they forgave her that. And when she turned in the dance and saw her father with his scimitar, their hearts beat swiftly for her. Nor were all eyes tearless, when she pleaded with him for her life.

Strangely absorbed, quite callous of his two companions, Lord George gazed over the footlights. He seemed as one who is in a trance. Of a sudden, something shot sharp into his heart. In pain he sprang to his feet and, as he turned, he seemed to see a winged and laughing child, in whose hand was a bow, fly swiftly away into the darkness. At his side, was the Dwarf's chair. It was empty. Only La Gambogi was with him and her dark face was like the face of a fury.

Presently he sank back into his chair, holding one hand to his heart, that still throbbed from the strange transfixion. He breathed very painfully and seemed scarce conscious of his surroundings. But La Gambogi knew he would pay no more homage to her now, for that the love of Jenny Mere had come into his heart.

When the operette was over, his love-sick lordship snatched up his cloak and went away without one word to the lady at his side. Rudely he brushed aside Count Karoloff and Mr. FitzClarence, with whom he had arranged to play hazard. Of his comrades, his cynicism, his reckless scorn—of all the material of his existence—he was oblivious now. He had no time for penitence or diffident delay

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delay. He only knew that he must kneel at the feet of Jenny Mere and ask her to be his wife.

"Miss Mere is in her room," said Garble, "resuming her ordinary attire. If your lordship deign to await the conclusion of her humble toilet, it shall be my privilege to present her to your lordship. Even now, indeed, I hear her footfall on the stair."

Lord George uncovered his head and with one hand nervously smoothed his rebellious wig.

"Miss Mere, come hither," said Garble, "This is my Lord George Hell, that you have pleased whom by your poor efforts this night will ever be the prime gratification of your passage through the roseate realms of art."

Little Miss Mere, who had never seen a lord, except in fancy or in dreams, curtsied shyly and hung her head. With a loud crash, Lord George fell on his knees. The manager was greatly surprised, the girl greatly embarrassed. Yet neither of them laughed, for sincerity dignified his posture and sent eloquence from its lips.

"Miss Mere," he cried, "give ear, I pray you, to my poor words, nor spurn me in misprision from the pedestal of your Beauty, Genius and Virtue. All too conscious, alas! of my presumption in the same, I yet abase myself before you as a suitor for your adorable Hand. I grope under the shadow of your raven Locks. I am dazzled in the light of those translucent orbs, your Eyes. In the intolerable whirlwind of your Fame I faint and am afraid."

"Sir——" the girl began, simply.

"Say 'My Lord,'" said Garble, solemnly.

"My lord, I thank you for your words. They are beautiful. But indeed, indeed, I can never be your bride."

Lord George hid his face in his hands.

"Child,"

"Child," said Mr. Garble, "let not the sun rise ere you have retracted those wicked words."

"My wealth, my rank, my irremediable love for you, I throw them at your feet," Lord George cried, piteously. "I would wait an hour, a week, a lustre, even a decade, did you but bid me hope!"

"I can never be your wife," she said, slowly. "I can never be the wife of any man whose face is not saintly. Your face, my lord, mirrors, it may be, true love for me, but it is even as a mirror long tarnished by the reflection of this world's vanity. It is even as a tarnished mirror. Do not kneel to me, for I am poor and humble. I was not made for such impetuous wooing. Kneel, if you please, to some greater, gayer lady. As for my love, it is my own, nor can it be ever torn from me, but given, as true love must needs be given, freely. Ah! rise from your knees. That man, whose face is wonderful as are the faces of the saints, to him I will give my true love."

Miss Mere, though visibly affected, had spoken this speech with a gesture and elocution so superb, that Mr. Garble could not help applauding, deeply though he regretted her attitude towards his honoured patron. As for Lord George he was immobile as a stricken oak. With a sweet look of pity, Miss Mere went her way, and Mr. Garble, with some solicitude, helped his lordship to rise from his knees. Out into the night, without a word, went his lordship. Above him the stars were still splendid. They seemed to mock the festoons of little lamps, dim now and guttering, in the garden of Garble's. What should he do? No thoughts came. Only his heart burnt hotly. He stood on the brim of Garble's lake, shallow and artificial as his past life had been. Two swans slept on its surface. The moon shone strangely upon their white, twisted necks. Should he drown himself?

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There was no one in the garden to prevent him, and in the morning they would find him floating there, one of the noblest of love's victims. The garden would be closed in the evening. There would be no performance in the little theatre. It might be that Jenny Mere would mourn him. "Life is a prison, without bars," he murmured, as he walked away.

All night long he strode, knowing not whither, through the mysterious streets and squares of London. The watchmen, to whom his figure was most familiar, gripped their staves at his approach, for they had old reason to fear his wild and riotous habits. He did not heed them. Through that dim conflict between darkness and day, which is ever waged silently over our sleep, Lord George strode on in the deep absorption of his love and of his despair. At dawn, he found himself on the outskirts of a little wood in Kensington. A rabbit rushed past him through the dew. Birds were fluttering in the branches. The leaves were tremulous with the presage of day, and the air was full of the sweet scent of hyacinths.

How cool the country was! It seemed to cure the feverish maladies of his soul and consecrate his love. In the fair light of the dawn he began to shape the means of winning Jenny Mere, that he had conceived in the desperate hours of the night. Soon an old woodman passed by, and, with rough courtesy, showed him the path that would lead him quickest to the town. He was loth to leave the wood. With Jenny, he thought, he would live always in the country. And he picked a posy of wild flowers for her.

His *rentrée* into the still silent town strengthened his Arcadian resolves. He, who had seen the town so often in its hours of sleep, had never noticed how sinister its whole aspect was. In its narrow streets the white houses rose on either side of him like cliffs

cliffs of chalk. He hurried swiftly along the unswept pavement. How had he loved this city of evil secrets?

At last he came to St. James's Square, to the hateful door of his own house. Shadows lay like memories in every corner of the dim hall. Through the window of his room, a sunbeam slanted across his smooth bed, and fell ghastly on the ashen grate.

•

It was a bright morning in Old Bond Street, and fat little Mr. Aeneas, the fashionable mask-maker, was sunning himself at the door of his shop. His window was lined as usual with all kinds of masks—beautiful masks with pink cheeks, and absurd masks with protuberant chins; curious *πρόσωπα* copied from old tragic models; masks of paper for children, of fine silk for ladies, and of leather for working men; bearded or beardless, gilded or waxen (most of them, indeed, were waxen), big or little masks. And in the middle of this vain galaxy hung the presentment of a Cyclops' face, carved cunningly of gold, with a great sapphire in its brow.

The sun gleamed brightly on the window, and on the bald head and varnished shoes of fat little Mr. Aeneas. It was too early for any customers to come, and Mr. Aeneas seemed to be greatly enjoying his leisure in the fresh air. He smiled complacently as he stood there, and well he might, for he was a great artist, and was patronised by several crowned heads and not a few of the nobility. Only the evening before, Mr. Brummell had come into his shop and ordered a light summer mask, wishing to evade, for a time, the jealous vigilance of Lady Otterton. It pleased Mr. Aeneas to think that his art made him recipient of so many high secrets. He smiled as he thought of the titled spendthrifts, who, at this moment, *perdus* behind his masterpieces, passed unscathed among their creditors. He was the secular confessor of his day, always able to give absolution. An unique position!

The

The street was as quiet as a village street. At an open window over the way, a handsome lady, wrapped in a muslin *peignoir*, sat sipping her cup of chocolate. It was La Signora Gambogi, and Mr. Aeneas made her many elaborate bows. This morning, however, her thoughts seemed far away, and she did not notice the little man's polite efforts. Nettled at her negligence, Mr. Aeneas was on the point of retiring into his shop, when he saw Lord George Hell hastening up the street, with a posy of wild flowers in his hand.

"His lordship is up betimes!" he said to himself. "An early visit to La Signora, I suppose."

Not so, however. His lordship came straight towards the mask-shop. Once he glanced up at the Signora's window and looked deeply annoyed when he saw her sitting there. He came quickly into the shop.

"I want the mask of a saint," he said.

"Mask of a saint, my lord? Certainly!" said Mr. Aeneas, briskly. "With or without halo? His Grace the Bishop of St. Aldreds always wears his with a halo. Your lordship does not wish for a halo? Certainly. If your lordship will allow me to take his measurement——"

"I must have the mask to-day," Lord George said. "Have you none ready-made?"

"Ah, I see. Required for immediate wear," murmured Mr. Aeneas, dubiously. "You see, your lordship takes a rather large size." And he looked at the floor.

"Julius!" he cried suddenly to his assistant, who was putting the finishing touches to a mask of Barbarossa which the young king of Zürreburg was to wear at his coronation, the following week. "Julius! Do you remember the saint's mask we made for Mr. Ripsby, a couple of years ago?"

"Yes,

"Yes, sir," said the boy. "It's stored upstairs."

"I thought so," replied Mr. Aeneas. "Mr. Ripsby only had it on hire. Step upstairs, Julius, and bring it down. I fancy it is just what your lordship would wish. Spiritual, yet handsome."

"Is it a mask that is even as a mirror of true love?" Lord George asked, gravely.

"It was made precisely as such," the mask-maker answered. "In fact it was made for Mr. Ripsby to wear at his silver wedding, and was very highly praised by the relatives of Mrs. Ripsby. Will your lordship step into my little room?"

So Mr. Aeneas led the way to his parlour behind the shop. He was elated by the distinguished acquisition to his *clientèle*, for hitherto Lord George had never patronised his business. He bustled round his parlour and insisted that his lordship should take a chair and a pinch from his snuff-box, while the saint's mask was being found.

Lord George's eye travelled along the rows of framed letters from great personages, which lined the walls. He did not see them, though, for he was calculating the chances that La Gambogi had not observed him, as he entered the mask-shop. He had come down so early that he had thought she would be still abed. That sinister old proverb, *La jalouse se lève de bonne heure*, rose in his memory. His eye fell unconsciously on a large, round mask made of dull silver, with the features of a human face traced over its surface in faint filigree.

"Your lordship wonders what mask that is?" chirped Mr. Aeneas, tapping the thing with one of his little finger nails.

"What is that mask?" Lord George murmured.

"I ought not to divulge, my lord," said the mask-maker. "But I know your lordship would respect a professional secret, a secret
of

of which I am pardonable proud. This," he said, "is a mask for the sun-god, Apollo, whom heaven bless ! "

"You astound me," said Lord George.

"Of no less a person, I do assure you. When Jupiter, his father, made him lord of the day, Apollo craved that he might sometimes see the doings of mankind in the hours of night time. Jupiter granted so reasonable a request. When next Apollo had passed over the sky and hidden in the sea, and darkness had fallen on all the world, he raised his head above the waters that he might watch the doings of mankind in the hours of night time. But," Mr. Aeneas added, with a smile, "his bright countenance made light all the darkness. Men rose from their couches or from their revels, wondering that day was so soon come, and went to their work. And Apollo sank weeping into the sea. 'Surely,' he cried, 'it is a bitter thing that I alone, of all the gods, may not watch the world in the hours of night time. For in those hours, as I am told, men are even as gods are. They spill the wine and are wreathed with roses. Their daughters dance in the light of torches. They laugh to the sound of flutes. On their long couches they lie down at last, and sleep comes to kiss their eyelids. None of these things may I see. Wherefore the brightness of my beauty is even as a curse to me and I would put it from me.' And as he wept, Vulcan said to him, 'I am not the least cunning of the gods, nor the least pitiful. Do not weep, for I will give you that which shall end your sorrow. Nor need you put from you the brightness of your beauty.' And Vulcan made a mask of dull silver and fastened it across his brother's face. And that night, thus masked, the sun-god rose from the sea and watched the doings of mankind in the night time. Nor any longer were men abashed by his bright beauty, for it was hidden by the mask of silver. Those whom he had so often seen haggard
over

over their daily tasks, he saw feasting now and wreathed with red roses. He heard them laugh to the sound of flutes, as their daughters danced in the red light of torches. And when at length they lay down upon their soft couches, and sleep kissed their eyelids, he sank back into the sea and hid his mask under a little rock in the bed of the sea. Nor have men ever known that Apollo watches them often in the night time, but fancied it to be some pale goddess."

"I myself have always thought it was Diana," said Lord George Hell.

"An error, my lord!" said Mr. Aeneas, with a smile. "*Ecce signum!*" And he tapped the mask of dull silver.

"Strange!" said his lordship. "And pray how comes it that Apollo has ordered of *you* this new mask?"

"He has always worn twelve new masks every year, inasmuch as no mask can endure for many nights the near brightness of his face, before which even a mask of the best and purest silver soon tarnishes, and wears away. Centuries ago, Vulcan tired of making so very many masks. And so Apollo sent Mercury down to Athens, to the shop of Phoron, a Phœnician mask-maker of great skill. Phoron made Apollo's masks for many years, and every month Mercury came to his shop for a new one. When Phoron died, another artist was chosen, and, when he died another, and so on through all the ages of the world. Conceive, my lord, my pride and pleasure when Mercury flew into my shop, one night last year, and made me Apollo's warrant-holder. It is the highest privilege that any mask-maker can desire. And when I die," said Mr. Aeneas, with some emotion, "Mercury will confer my post upon another."

"And do they pay you for your labour?" Lord George asked.

Mr. Aeneas drew himself up to his full height, such as it was.

"In

"In Olympus, my lord," he said, "they have no currency. For any mask-maker, so high a privilege is its own reward. Yet the sun-god is generous. He shines more brightly into my shop than into any other. Nor does he suffer his rays to melt any waxen mask made by me, until its wearer doff it and it be done with." At this moment, Julius came in with the Ripsby mask. "I must ask your lordship's pardon for having kept you so long," pleaded Mr. Aeneas. "But I have a large store of old masks and they are imperfectly catalogued."

It certainly was a beautiful mask, with its smooth, pink cheeks and devotional brow. It was made of the finest wax. Lord George took it gingerly in his hands and tried it on his face. It fitted *à merveille*.

"Is the expression exactly as your lordship would wish?" said Mr. Aeneas.

Lord George laid it on the table and studied it intently. "I wish it were more as a perfect mirror of true love," he said at length. "It is too calm, too contemplative."

"Easily remedied!" said Mr. Aeneas. Selecting a fine pencil, deftly he drew the eyebrows closer to each other. With a brush steeped in some scarlet pigment, he put a fuller curve upon the lips. And, behold! it was the mask of a saint who loves dearly. Lord George's heart throbbed with pleasure.

"And for how long does your lordship wish to wear it?" asked Mr. Aeneas.

"I must wear it until I die," replied Lord George.

"Kindly be seated then, I pray," rejoined the little man. "For I must apply the mask with great care. Julius, you will assist me!"

So, while Julius heated the inner side of the waxen mask over a little lamp, Mr. Aeneas stood over Lord George, gently smearing his

his features with some sweet-scented pomade. Then he took the mask and powdered its inner side, all soft and warm now, with a fluffy puff. "Keep quite still, for one instant," he said, and clapped the mask firmly on his lordship's upturned face. So soon as he was sure of its perfect adhesion, he took from his assistant's hand a silver file and a little wooden spatula, with which he proceeded to pare down the edge of the mask, where it joined the neck and ears. At length, all traces of the "join" were obliterated. It remained only to arrange the curls of the lordly wig over the waxen brow.

The disguise was done. When Lord George looked through the eyelets of his mask into the mirror that was placed in his hand, he saw a face that was saintly, itself a mirror of true love. How wonderful it was! He felt his past was a dream. He felt he was a new man indeed. His voice went strangely through the mask's parted lips, as he thanked Mr. Aeneas.

"Proud to have served your lordship," said that little worthy, pocketing his fee of fifty guineas, while he bowed his customer out.

When he reached the street, Lord George nearly uttered a curse through those sainted lips of his. For there, right in his way, stood La Gambogi, holding a small, pink parasol. She laid her hand upon his sleeve and called him softly by his name. He passed her by without a word. Again she confronted him.

"I cannot let go so handsome a lover," she laughed, "even though he spurn me! Do not spurn me, George. Give me your posy of wild flowers. Why, you never looked so lovingly at me in all your life!"

"Madam," said Lord George, sternly, "I have not the honour to know you." And he passed on.

The lady gazed after her lost lover with the blackest hatred in her

her eyes. Presently she beckoned across the road to a certain spy.

And the spy followed him.

Lord George, greatly agitated, had turned into Piccadilly. It was horrible to have met this garish embodiment of his past on the very threshold of his fair future. The mask-maker's elevating talk about the gods, followed by the initiative ceremony of his saintly mask, had driven all discordant memories from his love-thoughts of Jenny Mere. And then to be met by La Gambogi ! It might be that, after his stern words, she would not again seek to cross his path. Surely she would dare not mar his sacred love. Yet, he knew her dark, Italian nature, her passion of revenge. What was the line in Virgil ? *Spretaque*—something. Who knew but that, somehow, sooner or later, she might come between him and his love ?

He was about to pass Lord Barrymore's mansion. Count Karoloff and Mr. FitzClarence were lounging in one of the lower windows. Would they know him under his mask ? Thank God, they did not. They merely laughed as he went by, and Mr. FitzClarence cried in a mocking voice, "Sing us a hymn, Mr. Whatever-your-saint's-name-is !" The mask, then, at least, was perfect. Jenny Mere would not know him. He need fear no one but La Gambogi. But would not she betray his secret ? He sighed.

That night he was going to visit Garble's and to declare his love to the little actress. He never doubted that she would love him for his saintly face. Had she not said, "That man whose face is wonderful as are the faces of the saints, to him I will give my true love" ? She could not say now that his face was as a tarnished mirror of love. She would smile on him.

him. She would be his bride. But would La Gambogi be at Garble's?

The operette would not be over before ten that night. The clock in Hyde Park Gate told him it was not yet ten—ten o' the morning. Twelve whole hours to wait, before he could fall at Jenny's feet! "I cannot spend that time in this place of memories," he thought. So he hailed a yellow cabriolet and bade the jarvey drive him out to the village of Kensington.

When they came to the little wood where he had been but a few hours ago, Lord George dismissed the jarvey. The sun, that had risen as he stood there thinking of Jenny, shone down on his altered face. But, though it shone very fiercely, it did not melt his waxen features. The old woodman, who had shown him his way, passed by under a load of faggots and did not know him. He wandered among the trees. It was a lovely wood.

Presently he came to the bank of that tiny stream, the Ken, which still flowed there in those days. On the moss of its bank he lay down and let its water ripple over his hand. Some bright pebble glistened under the surface, and, as he peered down at it, he saw in the stream the reflection of his mask. A great shame filled him that he should so cheat the girl he loved. Behind that fair mask there would still be the evil face that had repelled her. Could he be so base as to decoy her into love of that most ingenious deception? He was filled with a great pity for her, with a hatred of himself. And yet, he argued, was the mask indeed a mean trick? Surely it was a secret symbol of his true repentance and of his true love. His face was evil, because his life had been evil. He had seen a gracious girl, and of a sudden his very soul had changed. His face alone was the same as it had been. It was not just that his face should be evil still.

There was the faint sound of some one sighing. Lord George looked

looked up, and there, on the further bank, stood Jenny Mere, watching him. As their eyes met, she blushed and hung her head. She looked like nothing but a tall child, as she stood there, with her straight, limp frock of lilac cotton and her sunburnt straw bonnet. He dared not speak ; he could only gaze at her. Suddenly there perched astride the bough of a tree, at her side, that winged and laughing child, in whose hand was a bow. Before Lord George could warn her, an arrow had flashed down and vanished in her heart, and Cupid had flown away.

No cry of pain did she utter, but stretched out her arms to her lover, with a glad smile. He leapt quite lightly over the little stream and knelt at her feet. It seemed more fitting that he should kneel before the gracious thing he was unworthy of. But she, knowing only that his face was as the face of a great saint, bent over him and touched him with her hand.

"Surely," she said, "you are that good man for whom I have waited. Therefore do not kneel to me, but rise and suffer me to kiss your hand. For my love of you is lowly, and my heart is all yours."

But he answered, looking up into her fond eyes, "Nay, you are a queen, and I must needs kneel in your presence."

And she shook her head wistfully, and she knelt down also, in her tremulous ecstasy, before him. And as they knelt, the one to the other, the tears came into her eyes, and he kissed her. Though the lips that he pressed to her lips were only waxen, he thrilled with happiness, in that mimic kiss. He held her close to him in his arms, and they were silent in the sacredness of their love.

From his breast he took the posy of wild flowers that he had gathered.

"They are for you," he whispered, "I gathered them for you, hours ago, in this wood. See ! They are not withered."

But

But she was perplexed by his words and said to him, blushing, "How was it for me that you gathered them, though you had never seen me?"

"I gathered them for you," he answered, "knowing I should soon see you. How was it that you, who had never seen me, yet waited for me?"

"I waited, knowing I should see you at last." And she kissed the posy and put it at her breast.

And they rose from their knees and went into the wood, walking hand in hand. As they went, he asked the names of the flowers that grew under their feet. "These are primroses," she would say. "Did you not know? And these are ladies' feet, and these forget-me-nots. And that white flower, climbing up the trunks of the trees and trailing down so prettily from the branches, is called Astyanax. These little yellow things are buttercups. Did you not know?" And she laughed.

"I know the names of none of the flowers," he said.

She looked up into his face and said timidly, "Is it wordly and wrong of me to have loved the flowers? Ought I to have thought more of those higher things that are unseen?"

His heart smote him. He could not answer her simplicity.

"Surely the flowers are good, and did not you gather this posy for me?" she pleaded. "But if you do not love them, I must not. And I will try to forget their names. For I must try to be like you in all things."

"Love the flowers always," he said. "And teach me to love them."

So she told him all about the flowers, how some grew very slowly and others bloomed in a night; how clever the convolvulus was at climbing, and how shy violets were, and why honeycups had folded petals. She told him of the birds, too, that sang
in

in the wood, how she knew them all by their voices. "That is a chaffinch singing. Listen!" she said. And she tried to imitate its note, that her lover might remember. All the birds, according to her, were good, except the cuckoo, and whenever she heard him sing she would stop her ears, lest she should forgive him for robbing the nests. "Every day," she said, "I have come to the wood, because I was lonely, and it seemed to pity me. But now I have you. And it is glad."

She clung closer to his arm, and he kissed her. She pushed back her straw bonnet, so that it dangled from her neck by its ribands, and laid her little head against his shoulder. For a while he forgot his treachery to her, thinking only of his love and her love. Suddenly she said to him, "Will you try not to be angry with me, if I tell you something? It is something that will seem dreadful to you."

"*Pauvrete*," he answered, "you cannot have anything very dreadful to tell."

"I am very poor," she said, "and every night I dance in a theatre. It is the only thing I can do to earn my bread. Do you despise me because I dance?" She looked up shyly at him and saw that his face was full of love for her and not angry.

"Do you like dancing?" he asked.

"I hate it," she answered, quickly. "I hate it indeed. Yet tonight, alas! I must dance again in the theatre."

"You need never dance again," said her lover. "I am rich and I will pay them to release you. You shall dance only for me. Sweetheart, it cannot be much more than noon. Let us go into the town, while there is time, and you shall be made my bride, and I your bridegroom, this very day. Why should you and I be lonely?"

"I do not know," she said.

So they walked back through the wood, taking a narrow path which Jenny said would lead them quickest to the village. And, as they went, they came to a tiny cottage, with a garden that was full of flowers. The old woodman was leaning over its paling, and he nodded to them as they passed.

"I often used to envy the woodman," said Jenny, "living in that dear little cottage."

"Let us live there, then," said Lord George. And he went back and asked the old man if he were not unhappy, living there all alone.

"'Tis a poor life here for me," the old man answered. "No folk come to the wood, except little children, now and again, to play, or lovers like you. But they seldom notice me. And in winter I am alone with Jack Frost. Old men love merrier company than that. Oh! I shall die in the snow with my faggots on my back. A poor life here?"

"I will give you gold for your cottage and whatever is in it, and then you can go and live happily in the town," Lord George said. And he took from his coat a note for two hundred guineas, and held it across the palings.

"Lovers are poor, foolish derry-docks," the old man muttered. "But I thank you kindly, sir. This little sum will keep me finely, as long as I last. Come into the cottage as soon as soon can be. It's a lonely place and does my heart good to depart from it."

"We are going to be married this afternoon, in the town," said Lord George. "We will come straight back to our home."

"May you be happy!" replied the woodman. "You'll find me gone when you come."

And the lovers thanked him and went their way.

"Are

"Are you very rich?" Jenny asked. "Ought you to have bought the cottage for that great price?"

"Would you love me as much if I were quite poor, little Jenny?" he asked her, after a pause.

"I did not know you were rich when I saw you across the stream," she said.

And in his heart Lord George made a good resolve. He would put away from him all his worldly possessions. All the money that he had won at the clubs, fairly or foully, all that hideous accretion of gold guineas, he would distribute among the comrades he had impoverished. As he walked, with the sweet and trustful girl at his side, the vague record of his infamy assailed him, and a look of pain shot behind his smooth mask. He would atone. He would shun no sacrifice that might cleanse his soul. All his fortune he would put from him. Follard Chase he would give back to poor Sir Follard. He would sell his house in St. James's Square. He would keep some little part of his patrimony, enough for him in the wood with Jenny, but no more.

"I shall be quite poor, Jenny," he said.

And they talked of the things that lovers love to talk of, how happy they would be together and how economical. As they were passing Herbert's pastry-shop, which, as my little readers know, still stands in Kensington, Jenny looked up rather wistfully into her lover's ascetic face.

"Should you think me greedy," she asked him, "if I wanted a bun? They have beautiful buns here!"

Buns! The simple word started latent memories of his childhood. Jenny was only a child, after all. Buns! He had forgotten what they were like. And as they looked at the piles of variegated cakes in the window, he said to her, "Which are buns, Jenny? I should like to have one, too."

"I am

So he bought two beautiful buns, and they sat together in the shop, eating them. Jenny bit hers rather diffidently, but was reassured when he said that they must have buns very often in the cottage. Yes! he, the famous toper and *gourmet* of St. James's, relished this homely fare, as it passed through the insensible lips of his mask to his palate. He seemed to rise, from the consumption of his bun, a better man.

An hour later they were married according to the simple rites of a dear little registry office in Covent Garden.

And in the cool evening they went home.

In the cottage that had been the woodman's they had a wonderful
The Yellow Book—Vol. XI. c honeymoon.

honeymoon. No king and queen in any palace of gold were happier than they. For them their tiny cottage was a palace, and the flowers that filled the garden were their courtiers. Long and careless and full of kisses were the days of their reign.

Sometimes, indeed, strange dreams troubled Lord George's sleep. Once he dreamt that he stood knocking and knocking at the great door of a castle. It was a bitter night. The frost enveloped him. No one came. Presently he heard a footstep in the hall beyond, and a pair of frightened eyes peered at him through the grill. Jenny was scanning his face. She would not open to him. With tears and wild words he beseeched her, but she would not open to him. Then, very stealthily, he crept round the castle and found a small casement in the wall. It was open. He climbed swiftly, quietly through it. In the darkness of the room, some one ran to him and kissed him gladly. It was Jenny. With a cry of joy and shame he awoke. By his side lay Jenny, sleeping like a little child.

After all, what was a dream to him? It could not mar the reality of his daily happiness. He cherished his true penitence for the evil he had done in the past. The past! That was indeed the only unreal thing that lingered in his life. Every day its substance dwindled, grew fainter yet, as he lived his rustic honeymoon. Had he not utterly put it from him? Had he not, a few hours after his marriage, written to his lawyer, declaring solemnly that he, Lord George Hell, had forsworn the world, that he was where no man would find him, that he desired all his worldly goods to be distributed, thus and thus, among these and those of his companions? By this testament he had verily atoned for the wrong he had done, had made himself dead indeed to the world.

No address had he written upon this document. Though its injunctions were final and binding, it could betray no clue of his hiding-place.

hiding-place. For the rest, no one would care to seek him out. He, who had done no good to human creature, would pass unmourned out of memory. The clubs, doubtless, would laugh and puzzle over his strange recantations, envious of whomever he had enriched. They would say 'twas a good riddance of a rogue and soon forget him.* But she, whose prime patron he had been,

* I would refer my little readers once more to the pages of *Contemporary Bucks*, where Captain Tarleton speculates upon the sudden disappearance of Lord George Hell and describes its effect on the town. "Not even the shrewdest," says he, "ever gave a guess that would throw a ray of revealing light on the *disparition* of this profligate man. It was supposed that he carried off with him a little dancer from Garble's, at which *haunt of pleasantry* he was certainly on the night he vanished, and whither the young lady never returned again. Garble declared he had been compensated for her perfidy, but that he was sure she had not succumbed to his lordship, having in fact rejected him soundly. Did his lordship, say the cronies, take his life—and hers? *Il n'y a pas d'épreuve*. The most astonishing matter is that the runaway should have written out a complete will, restoring all money he had won at cards, etc. etc. This certainly corroborates the opinion that he was seized with a sudden repentance and fled over the seas to a foreign monastery, where he died at last in *religious silence*. That's as it may, but many a spendthrift found his pocket chinking with guineas, a not unpleasant sound, I declare. The Regent himself was benefitted by the odd will, and old Sir Follard Follard found himself once more in the ancestral home he had forfeited. As for Lord George's mansion in St. James's Square, that was sold with all its appurtenances, and the money fetched by the sale, no bagatelle, was given to various good objects, according to my lord's stated wishes. Well, many of us blessed his name—we had cursed it often enough. Peace to his ashes, in whatever urn they be resting, on the billows of whatever ocean they float!"

been, who had loved him in her vile fashion, La Gambogi, would she forget him easily, like the rest? As the sweet days went by, her spectre, also, grew fainter and less formidable. She knew his mask indeed, but how should she find him in the cottage near Kensington? *Devia dulcedo latebrarum!* He was safe hidden with his bride. As for the Italian, she might search and search—or had forgotten him, in the arms of another lover.

Yes! Few and faint became the blemishes of his honeymoon. At first, he had felt that his waxen mask, though it had been the means of his happiness, was rather a barrier 'twixt him and his bride. Though it was sweet to kiss her through it, to look at her through it with loving eyes, yet there were times when it incommoded him with its mockery. Could he but put it from him! yet, that, of course, could not be. He must wear it all his life. And so, as days went by, he grew reconciled to his mask. No longer did he feel it jarring on his face. It seemed to become an integral part of him, and, for all its rigid material, it did forsooth express the one emotion that filled him, true love. The face, for whose sake Jenny gave him her heart, could not but be dear to this George Heaven, also.

Every day chastened him with its joy. They lived a very simple life, he and Jenny. They rose betimes, like the birds, for whose goodness they both had so sincere a love. Bread and honey and little strawberries were their morning fare, and in the evening they had seed cake and dewberry wine. Jenny herself made the wine, and her husband drank it, in strict moderation, never more than two glasses. He thought it tasted far better than the Regent's cherry brandy, or the Tokay at Brooks's. Of these treasured topos he had, indeed, nearly forgotten the taste. The wine made from wild berries by his little bride was august enough for his palate. Sometimes, after they had dined thus,
he

he would play the flute to her upon the moonlit lawn, or tell her of the great daisy-chain he was going to make for her on the morrow, or sit silently by her side, listening to the nightingale, till bedtime. So admirably simple were their days.

One morning, as he was helping Jenny to water the flowers, he said to her suddenly, "Sweetheart, we had forgotten!"

"What was there we should forget?" asked Jenny, looking up from her task.

"'Tis the mensiversary of our wedding," her husband answered, gravely. "We must not let it pass without some celebration."

"No, indeed," she said, "we must not. What shall we do?"

Between them they decided upon an unusual feast. They would go into the village and buy a bag of beautiful buns and eat them in the afternoon. So soon, then, as all the flowers were watered, they set forth to Herbert's shop, bought the buns and returned home in very high spirits, George bearing a paper bag that held no less than twelve of the wholesome delicacies. Under the plane tree on the lawn Jenny sat her down, and George stretched himself at her feet. They were loth to enjoy their feast too soon. They dallied in childish anticipation. On the little rustic table Jenny built up the buns, one above another, till they looked like a tall pagoda. When, very gingerly, she had crowned the structure with the twelfth bun, her husband looking on with admiration, she clapped her hands and danced round it. She laughed so loudly (for, though she was only sixteen years old, she had a great sense of humour), that the table shook, and, alas! the pagoda tottered and fell to the lawn. Swift as a kitten, Jenny chased the buns, as they rolled, hither and thither, over the grass, catching them

them deftly with her hand. Then she came back, flushed and merry under her tumbled hair, with her arm full of buns. She began to put them back in the paper bag.

"Dear husband," she said, looking timidly down to him, "why do not you smile too at my folly? Your grave face rebukes me. Smile, or I shall think I vex you. Please smile a little."

But the mask could not smile, of course. It was made for a mirror of true love, and it was grave and immobile. "I am very much amused, dear," he said, "at the fall of the buns, but my lips will not curve to a smile. Love of you has bound them in spell."

"But I can laugh, though I love you. I do not understand." And she wondered. He took her hand in his and stroked it gently, wishing it were possible to smile. Some day, perhaps, she would tire of his monotonous gravity, his rigid sweetness. It was not strange that she should long for a little facial expression. They sat silently.

"Jenny, what is it?" he whispered, suddenly. For Jenny, with wide-open eyes, was gazing over his head, across the lawn. "Why do you look frightened?"

"There is a strange woman smiling at me across the palings," she said. "I do not know her."

Her husband's heart sank. Somehow, he dared not turn his head to the intruder. He dreaded who she might be.

"She is nodding to me," said Jenny. "I think she is foreign, for she has an evil face."

"Do not notice her," he whispered. "Does she look evil?"

"Very evil and very dark. She has a pink parasol. Her teeth are like ivory."

"Do not notice her. Think! It is the mensiversary of our wedding, dear!"

"I wish

"I wish she would not smile at me. Her eyes are like bright blots of ink."

"Let us eat our beautiful buns!"

"Oh, she is coming in!" George heard the latch of the gate jar. "Forbid her to come in!" whispered Jenny, "I am afraid!" He heard the jar of heels on the gravel path. Yet he dared not turn. Only he clasped Jenny's hand more tightly, as he waited for the voice. It was La Gambogi's.

"Pray, pray, pardon me! I could not mistake the back of so old a friend."

With the courage of despair, George turned and faced the woman.

"Even," she smiled, "though his face has changed marvelously."

"Madam," he said, rising to his full height and stepping between her and his bride, "begone, I command you, from this garden. I do not see what good is to be served by the renewal of our acquaintance."

"Acquaintance!" murmured La Gambogi, with an arch of her beetle-brows. "Surely we were friends, rather, nor is my esteem for you so dead that I would crave estrangement."

"Madam," rejoined Lord George, with a tremor in his voice, "you see me here very happy, living very peacefully with my bride——"

"To whom, I beseech you, old friend, present me."

"I would not," he said hotly, "desecrate her sweet name by speaking it with so infamous a name as yours."

"Your choler hurts me, old friend," said La Gambogi, sinking composedly upon the garden-seat and smoothing the silk of her skirts.

"Jenny," said George, "then do you retire, pending this lady's departure,

departure, to the cottage." But Jenny clung to his arm. "I were less frightened at your side," she whispered. "Do not send me away!"

"Suffer her pretty presence," said La Gambogi. "Indeed I am come this long way from the heart of the town, that I may see her, no less than you, George. My wish is only to befriend her. Why should she not set you a mannerly example, giving me welcome? Come and sit by me, little bride, for I have things to tell you. Though you reject my friendship, give me, at least, the slight courtesy of audience. I will not detain you overlong, will be gone very soon. Are you expecting guests, George? *On dirait une masque champêtre!*" She eyed the couple critically. "Your wife's mask," she said, "is even better than yours."

"What does she mean?" whispered Jenny. "Oh, send her away!"

"Serpent," was all George could say, "crawl from our Eden, ere you poison with your venom its fairest denizen."

La Gambogi rose. "Even *my* pride," she cried passionately, "knows certain bounds. I have been forbearing, but even in *my* zeal for friendship I will not be called 'serpent.' I will indeed begone from this rude place. Yet, ere I go, there is a boon I will deign to beg. Show me, oh show me but once again, the dear face I have so often caressed, the lips that were dear to me!"

George started back.

"What does she mean?" whispered Jenny.

"In memory of our old friendship," continued La Gambogi, "grant me this piteous favour. Show me your own face but for one instant, and I vow I will never again remind you that I live. Intercede for me, little bride. Bid him unmask for me.

You

You have more authority over him than I. Doff his mask with your own uxorious fingers."

"What does she mean?" was the refrain of poor Jenny.

"If," said George, gazing sternly at his traitress, "you do not go now, of your own will, I must drive you, man though I am, violently from the garden."

"Doff your mask and I am gone."

George made a step of menace towards her.

"False saint!" she shrieked, "then I will unmask you."

Like a panther she sprang upon him and clawed at his waxen cheeks. Jenny fell back, mute with terror. Vainly did George try to free himself from the hideous assailant, who writhed round and round him, clawing, clawing at what Jenny fancied to be his face. With a wild cry, Jenny fell upon the furious creature and tried, with all her childish strength, to release her dear one. The combatives swayed to and fro, a revulsive trinity. There was a loud pop, as though some great cork had been withdrawn, and La Gambogi recoiled. She had torn away the mask. It lay before her upon the lawn, upturned to the sky.

George stood motionless. La Gambogi stared up into his face, and her dark flush died swiftly away. For there, staring back at her, was the man she had unmasked, but, lo! his face was even as his mask had been. Line for line, feature for feature, it was the same. 'Twas a saint's face.

"Madam," he said, in the calm voice of despair, "your cheek may well blanch, when you regard the ruin you have brought upon me. Nevertheless do I pardon you. The gods have avenged, through you, the imposture I wrought upon one who was dear to me. For that unpardonable sin I am punished. As for my poor bride, whose love I stole by the means of that waxen semblance, of her I cannot ask pardon. Ah, Jenny, Jenny do

not

not look at me. Turn your eyes from the foul reality that I dissembled." He shuddered and hid his face in his hands. "Do not look at me. I will go from the garden. Nor will I ever curse you with the odious spectacle of my face. Forget me, forget me."

But, as he turned to go, Jenny laid her hands upon his wrists and besought him that he would look at her. "For indeed," she said, "I am bewildered by your strange words. Why did you woo me under a mask? And why do you imagine I could love you less dearly, seeing your own face?"

He looked into her eyes. On their violet surface he saw the tiny reflection of his own face. He was filled with joy and wonder.

"Surely," said Jenny, "your face is even dearer to me, even fairer, than the semblance that hid it and deceived me. I am not angry. 'Twas well that you veiled from me the full glory of your face, for indeed I was not worthy to behold it too soon. But I am your wife now. Let me look always at your own face. Let the time of my probation be over. Kiss me with your own lips."

So he took her in his arms, as though she had been a little child, and kissed her with his own lips. She put her arms round his neck, and he was happier than he had ever been. They were alone in the garden now. Nor lay the mask any longer upon the lawn, for the sun had melted it.

A Ballad of Cornwall

By F. B. Money Coutts

I

SIR Tristram lay by a well,
 Making sad moan ;
Fast his tears fell,
For wild the wood through,
 Stricken with shrewd
 Sorrow, he ran,
When he deemed her untrue—
 La Beale Isoud !
For he loved her alone.

II

So as he lay,
 Wasted and wan,
 Scarce like a man,
Pricking that way
 His lady-love came,
 With her damsels around,
 And her face all a-flame
With the breezes of May ;

While

A Ballad of Cornwall

While a brachet beside her
Still bayed the fair rider,
Still leaped up and bayed her;
A small scenting hound
That Sir Tristram purveyed her.

III

So she rode on ;
But the brachet behind
Hung snuffing the wind,
Till seeking and crying
Faster and faster,
Beside the well lying
She found her dear master !
Then licking his ears
And cheeks wet with tears,
For joy never resting
Kept whining and questing.

IV

Isoud (returned,
Seeking her hound)
Soon as she learned
Tristram was found,
Straightway alighting,
Fell in a swoond.

V

Won by her lover
Thence to recover,

Who

Who shall the greeting
Tell of their meeting ?
Joy, by no tongue
E'er to be sung,
Passed in that plighting !

VI

Thus while they dallied,
Forth the wood sallied
An horrible libbard, and bare
The brachet away to his lair !

The Child's World

By Charles Robinson



The Friend of Man

By Henry Harland

THE other evening, in the Casino, the satisfaction of losing my money at *petits-chevaux* having begun to flag a little, I wandered into the Cercle, the reserved apartments in the west wing of the building, where they were playing *baccarat*.

Thanks to the heat, the windows were open wide ; and through them one could see, first, a vivid company of men and women, strolling backwards and forwards, and chattering busily, in the electric glare on the terrace ; and then, beyond them, the sea—smooth, motionless, sombre ; silent, despite its perpetual whisper ; inscrutable, sinister ; merging itself with the vast blackness of space. Here and there the black was punctured by a pin-point of fire, a tiny vacillating pin-point of fire ; and a landsman's heart quailed for a moment at the thought of lonely vessels braving the mysteries and terrors and the awful solitudes of the sea at night. . . .

So that the voice of the croupier, perfunctory, machine-like, had almost a human, almost a genial effect, as it rapped out suddenly, calling upon the players to mark their play. "*Marquez vos jeux, messieurs. Quarante louis par tableau.*" It brought one back to light and warmth and security, to the familiar earth, and the neighbourhood of men.

One's

One's pleasure was fugitive, however.

The neighbourhood of men, indeed! The neighbourhood of some two score very commonplace, very sordid men, seated or standing about an ugly green table, intent upon a game of baccarat, in a long, rectangular, ugly, gas-lit room. The banker dealt, and the croupier shouted, and the punters punted, and the ivory counters and mother-of-pearl plaques were swept now here, now there; and that was all. Everybody was smoking, of course; but the smell of the live cigarettes couldn't subdue the odour of dead ones, the stagnant, acrid odour of stale tobacco, with which the walls and hangings of the place were saturated.

The thing and the people were as banale, as unremunerative, as things and people for the most part are; and dispiriting, dispiriting. There was a hardness in the banality, a sort of cold ferocity, ill-repressed. One turned away, bored, revolted. It was better, after all, to look at the sea; to think of the lonely vessel, far out there, where a pin-point of fire still faintly blinked and glimmered in the illimitable darkness. . . .

But the voice of the croupier was insistent. "*Faites vos jeux, messieurs. Cinquante louis par tableau. Vos jeux sont faits? Rien ne va plus.*" It was suggestive, persuasive, besides, to one who has a bit of a gambler's soul. I saw myself playing, I felt the poignant tremor of the instant of suspense, while the result is uncertain, the glow that comes if you have won, the twinge if you have lost. "*La banque est aux enchères,*" the voice announced presently; and I moved towards the table.

The sums bid were not extravagant. Ten, fifteen, twenty louis; thirty, fifty, eighty, a hundred.

"Cent louis? Cent? Cent?—Cent louis à la banque," cried the inevitable voice.

I glanced

I glanced at the man who had taken the bank for a hundred louis. I glanced at him, and, all at once, by no means without emotion, I recognised him.

He was a tall, thin man, and very old. He had the hands of a very old man, dried-up, shrunken hands, with mottled-yellow skin, dark veins that stood out like wires, and parched finger-nails. His face, too, was mottled-yellow, deepening to brown about the eyes, with grey wrinkles, and purplish lips. He was clearly very old; eighty, or more than eighty.

He was dressed entirely in black: a black frock-coat, black trousers, a black waistcoat, cut low, and exposing an unusual quantity of shirt-front, three black studs, and a black tie, a stiff, narrow bow. These latter details, however, save when some chance motion on his part revealed them, were hidden by his beard, a broad, abundant beard, that fell a good ten inches down his breast. His hair, also, was abundant, and he wore it long; trained straight back from his forehead, hanging in a fringe about the collar of his coat. Hair and beard, despite his manifest great age, were without a spear of white. They were of a dry, inanimate brown, a hue to which they had faded (one surmised) from black.

If it was surprising to see so old a man at a baccarat table, it was still more surprising to see just this sort of man. He looked like anything in the world, rather than a gambler. With his tall wasted figure, with his patriarchal beard, his long hair trained in that rigid fashion straight back from his forehead; with his stern aquiline profile, his dark eyes, deep-set and wide-apart, melancholy, thoughtful: he looked—what shall I say? He looked like

anything in the world, rather than a gambler. He looked like a *savant*, he looked like a philosopher; he looked intellectual, refined, ascetic even; he looked as if he had ideas, convictions; he looked grave and wise and sad. Holding the bank at baccarat, in this vulgar company at the Grand Cercle of the Casino, dealing the cards with his withered hands, studying them with his deep meditative eyes, he looked improbable, inadmissible, he looked supremely out of place.

I glanced at him, and wondered. And then, suddenly, my heart gave a jump, my throat began to tingle.

I had recognised him. It was rather more than ten years since I had seen him last; and in ten years he had changed, he had decayed terribly. But I was quite sure, quite sure.

"By Jove," I thought, "it's Ambrose—it's Augustus Ambrose! It's the Friend of Man!"

Augustus Ambrose? I daresay the name conveys nothing to you? And yet, forty, thirty, twenty years ago, Augustus Ambrose was not without his measure of celebrity in the world. If almost nobody had read his published writings, if few had any but the dimmest notion of what his theories and aims were, almost everybody had at least heard of him, almost everybody knew at least that there was such a man, and that the man had theories and aims—of some queer radical sort. One knew, in vague fashion, that he had disciples, that there were people here and there who called themselves "Ambrosites."

I say twenty years ago. But twenty years ago he was already pretty well forgotten. I imagine the moment of his utmost notoriety would have fallen somewhere in the fifties or the sixties, somewhere between '55 and '68.

And

And if my sudden recognition of him in the Casino made my heart give a jump, there was sufficient cause. During the greater part of my childhood, Augustus Ambrose lived with us, was virtually a member of our family. Then I saw a good deal of him again, when I was eighteen, nineteen ; and still again, when I was four or five and twenty.

He lived with us, indeed, from the time when I was scarcely more than a baby till I was ten or eleven ; so that in my very farthest memories he is a personage—looking backwards, I see him in the earliest, palest dawn : a tall man, dressed in black, with long hair and a long beard, who was always in our house, and who used to be frightfully severe ; who would turn upon me with a most terrifying frown if I misconducted myself in his presence, who would loom up unexpectedly from behind closed doors, and utter a soul-piercing *hist-hist*, if I was making a noise : a sort of domesticated Croquemitaine, whom we had always with us.

Always? Not quite always, though ; for, when I stop to think, I remember there would be breathing spells : periods during which he would disappear—during which you could move about the room, and ask questions, and even (at a pinch) upset things, without being frowned at ; during which you could shout lustily at your play, unoppressed by the fear of a black figure suddenly opening the door and freezing you with a *hist-hist* ; during which, in fine, you could forget the humiliating circumstance that children are called into existence to be seen and not heard, with its irksome moral that they should never speak unless they are spoken to. Then, one morning, I would wake up, and find that he was in the house again. He had returned during the night.

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That was his habit, to return at night. But on one occasion, at least, he returned in the daytime. I remember driving with my father and mother, in our big open carriage, to the railway station, and then driving back home, with Mr. Ambrose added to our party. Why I—a child of six or seven, between whom and our guest surely no love was lost—why I was taken upon this excursion, I can't at all conjecture; I suppose my people had their reasons. Anyhow, I recollect the drive home with particular distinctness. Two things impressed me. First, Mr. Ambrose, who always dressed in black, wore a *brown* overcoat; I remember gazing at it with bemused eyes, and reflecting that it was exactly the colour of gravy. And secondly, I gathered from his conversation that he had been in prison! Yes. I gathered that he had been in Rome (we were living in Florence), and that one day he had been taken up by the policemen, and put in prison!

Of course, I could say nothing; but what I felt, what I thought! Mercy upon us, that we should know a man, that a man should live with us, who had been taken up and put in prison! I fancied him dragged through the streets by two gendarmes, struggling with them, and followed by a crowd of dirty people. I felt that our family was disgraced, we who had been the pink of respectability; my cheeks burned, and I hung my head. I could say nothing; but oh, the grief, the shame, I nursed in secret! Mr. Ambrose, who lived with us, whose standards of conduct (for children, at any rate) were so painfully exalted, Mr. Ambrose had done something terrible, and had been found out, and put in prison for it! Mr. Ambrose, who always dressed in black, had suddenly tossed his bonnet over the mills, and displayed himself cynically in an overcoat of rakish, dare-devil brown—the colour of gravy! Somehow, the notion pursued me, there must be a connection between his overcoat and his crime.

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The enormity of the affair preyed upon my spirit, day after day, night after night, until, in the end, I could endure it silently no longer ; and I spoke to my mother.

"Is Mr. Ambrose a burglar?" I enquired.

I remember my mother's perplexity, and then, when I had alleged the reasons for my question, her exceeding mirth. I remember her calling my father ; and my father, also, laughed prodigiously, and he went to the door, and cried, "Ambrose ! Ambrose !" And when Mr. Ambrose came, and the incident was related to him, even he laughed a little, even his stern face relaxed.

When, by-and-by, they had all stopped laughing, and Mr. Ambrose had gone back to his own room, my father and mother, between them, explained the matter to me. Mr. Ambrose, I must understand, (they said), was one of the greatest, and wisest, and best men in the world. He spent his whole life "doing good." When he was at home, with us, he was working hard, all day long and late into the night, writing books "to do good"—that was why he so often had a headache, and couldn't bear any noise in the house. And when he went away, when he was absent, it was to "do good" somewhere else. I had seen the poor people in the streets? I knew that there were thousands and thousands of people in the world, grown-up people, and children like myself, who had to wear ragged clothing, and live in dreadful houses, and eat bad food, or go hungry perhaps, all because they were so poor? Well, Mr. Ambrose spent his whole life doing good to those poor people, working hard for them, so that some day they might be rich, and clean, and happy, like us. But in Rome there was a very wicked, very cruel man, a cardinal: Cardinal Antonelli was his name. And Cardinal Antonelli hated people who did good, and was always trying to kidnap them and put them in prison. And that

that was what had happened to Mr. Ambrose. He had been doing good to the poor people in Rome, and Cardinal Antonelli had got wind of it, and had sent his awful *shirri* to seize him and put him in prison. But the Pope was a very good man, too; very just, and kind, and merciful; as good as it was possible for any man to be. Only, generally, he was so busy with the great spiritual cares of his office, that he couldn't pay much attention to the practical government of his City. He left that to Cardinal Antonelli, never suspecting how wicked he was, for the Cardinal constantly deceived him. But when the Pope heard that the great and good Mr. Ambrose had been put in prison, his Holiness was shocked and horrified, and very angry; and he sent for the Cardinal, and gave him a sound piece of his mind, and ordered him to let Mr. Ambrose out directly. And so Mr. Ambrose had been let out, and had come back to us.

It was a relief, no doubt, to learn that our guest was burglar, but I am afraid the knowledge of his excessive goodness left me somewhat cold. Or, rather, it influenced my feeling for him in any way, I fancy it only magnified my awe. He was one of the greatest, and wisest, and best men in the world, and he spent his entire time doing good to the poor. *Bene*; that was very nice for the poor. But for me? It did not make him a bit less severe, or cross, or testy; it did not make him a bit less an uncomfortable person to have in the house.

Indeed, the character, in a story such as I had heard, most likely to affect a child's imagination, would pretty certainly have been, not the hero, but the villain. Mr. Ambrose and his virtues moved one to scant enthusiasm; but Cardinal Antonelli! In describing him as wicked, and cruel, and deceitful, my people were simply using the language, expressing the sentiment,
of

of the country and the epoch : of Italy before 1870. In those days, if you were a Liberal, if you sympathised with the Italian party, as opposed to the Papal, and especially if you were a Catholic withal, and so could think no evil of the Pope himself—then heaven help the reputation of Cardinal Antonelli ! For my part, I saw a big man in a cassock, with a dark, wolfish face, and a bunch of great iron keys at his girdle, who prowled continually about the streets of Rome, attended by a gang of ruffian *shirri*, seeking whom he could kidnap and put in prison. So that when, not very long after this, we went to Rome for a visit, my heart misgave me ; it seemed as if we were marching headlong into the ogre's den, wantonly courting peril. And during the month or two of our sojourn there, I believe I was never quite easy in my mind. At any moment we might all be captured, loaded with chains, and cast into prison : horrible stone dungeons, dark and wet, infested by rats and spiders, where we should have to sleep on straw, where they would give us nothing but bread and water to eat and drink.

Charlatan. Impostor.

I didn't know what the words meant, but they stuck in my memory, and I felt that they were somehow appropriate. It was during that same visit to Rome that I had heard them. My Aunt Elizabeth, with whom we were staying, had applied them, in her vigorous way, to Mr. Ambrose (whom we had left behind us, in Florence). "Poh ! An empty windbag, a canting egotist, a twopenny-halfpenny charlatan, a cheap impostor," she had exclaimed, in the course of a discussion with my father.

Charlatan, impostor: yes, that was it. A man who never did anything but make himself disagreeable—who never petted
you,

you, or played with you, or told you stories, or gave you things—who never, in fact, took any notice of you at all, except to frown, and say *hist-hist*, when you were enjoying yourself—well, he might be one of the greatest, and best, and wisest men in the world, but, anyhow, he was a charlatan and an impostor. I had Aunt Elizabeth's authority for that.

One day, after our return to Florence, my second-cousin Isabel (she was thirteen, and I was in love with her)—my second-cousin Isabel was playing the piano, alone with me, in the school-room, when Mr. Ambrose opened the door, and said, in his testiest manner: "Stop that noise—stop that noise!"

"He's a horrid pig," cried Isabel, as soon as his back was turned.

"Oh, no; he isn't a pig," I protested. "He's one of the greatest, and wisest, and best men in the world, so of course he can't be a horrid pig. But I'll tell you what he *is*. He's a charlatan and an impostor."

"Really? How do you know?" Isabel wondered.

"I heard Aunt Elizabeth tell my father so."

"Oh, well, then it must be true," Isabel assented.

He lived with us till I was ten or eleven, at first in Florence, and afterwards in Paris. All day long he would sit in his room and write, (on the most beautiful, smooth, creamy paper—what wouldn't I have given to have acquired some of it for my own literary purposes!) and in the evening he would receive visitors: oh, such funny people, so unlike the people who came to see my mother and father. The men, for example, almost all of them, as Mr. Ambrose himself did, wore their hair long, so that it fell about their collars; whilst almost all the women had their hair cut

cut short. And then, they dressed so funnily: the women in the plainest garments—skirts and jackets, without a touch of ornament; the men in sombreros and Spanish cloaks, instead of ordinary hats and coats. They would come night after night, and pass rapidly through the outer regions of our establishment, and disappear in Mr. Ambrose's private room. And thence I could hear their voices, murmuring, murmuring, after I had gone to bed. At the same time, very likely, in another part of the house, my mother would be entertaining another company, such a different company—beautiful ladies, in bright-hued silks, with shining jewels, and diamond-dust in their hair (yes, in that ancient period, ladies of fashion, on the continent at least, used to powder their hair with a glittering substance known as “diamond-dust”) and officers in gold-embroidered uniforms, and men in dress-suits. And there would be music, and dancing, or theatricals, or a masquerade, and always a lovely supper—to some of whose unconsumed delicacies I would fall heir next day.

Only four of Mr. Ambrose's visitors at all detach themselves, as individuals, from the cloud.

One was Mr. Oddo Yodo. Mr. Oddo Yodo was a small, grey-bearded, dark-skinned Hungarian gentleman, with another name, something like Polak or Bolak. But I called him Mr. Oddo Yodo, because whenever we met, on his way to or from the chamber of Mr. Ambrose, he would bow to me, and smile pleasantly, and say: “Oddo Yodo, Oddo Yodo.” I discovered, in the end, that he was paying me the compliment of saluting me in my native tongue.

Another was an Irishman, named Slevin. I remember him, a burly creature, with a huge red beard, because one day he arrived at our house in a state of appalling drunkenness. I remember the incredulous dismay with which I saw a man in that condition

condition enter our very house. I remember our old servant, Alexandre, supporting him to Mr. Ambrose's door, nodding his head and making a face the while, to signify his opinion.

Still another was a pale young Italian priest, with a tonsure, round and big as a five-shilling piece, shorn in the midst of a dense growth of blue-black hair, upon which I always vaguely longed to put my finger, to see how it would feel. I forget his name, but I shall never forget the man, for he had an extraordinary talent: he could write *upside-down*. He would take a sheet of paper, and, beginning with the last letter, write my name for me upside-down, terminating it at the first initial with a splendid flourish. You will not wonder that I remember *him*.

The visitor I remember best, though, was a woman named Arséneff. She had short sandy hair, and she dressed in the ugliest black frocks, and she wore steel-rimmed spectacles; but she was a dear soul, notwithstanding. One afternoon she was shown into the room where I chanced to be studying my arithmetic lesson, to wait for Mr. Ambrose. And first, she sat down beside me, in the kindest fashion, and helped me out with my sums; and then (it is conceivable that I may have encouraged her by some cross-questioning) she told me the saddest, saddest story about herself. She told me that her husband had been the editor of a newspaper in Russia, and that he had published an article in his paper, saying that there ought to be schools where the poor people, who had to work all day, could go in the evening, and learn to read and write. And just for that, for nothing more than that, her husband and her two sons, who were his assistant-editors, had been arrested, and chained up with murderers and thieves and all the worst sorts of criminals, and forced to march, *on foot*, across thousands of miles of snow-covered country, to Siberia, where they had to work as convicts in the mines. And her husband, she said, had died of it; but

but her two sons were still there, working as convicts in the mines. She showed me their photographs, and she showed me a button, rather a pretty button of coloured glass, with gilt specks in it, that she had cut from the coat of one of them, when he had been arrested and taken from her. Poor Arséneff; my heart went out to her, and we became fast friends. She was never tired of talking, nor I of hearing, of her sons; and she gave me a good deal of practical assistance in my arithmetical researches, so that, at the Lycée where I was then an *externe*, I passed for an authority on Long Division.

Mr. Ambrose's visitors came night after night, and shut themselves up with him in his room, and stayed there, talking, talking, till long past bed-time; but I never knew what it was all about. Indeed, I can't remember that I ever felt any curiosity to know. It was simply a fact, a quite uninteresting fact, which one witnessed, and accepted, and thought no more of. Mr. Ambrose was an Olympian. Kenneth Grahame has reminded us with what superior unconcern, at the Golden Age, one regards the habits and doings and affairs of the Olympians.

And then, quite suddenly, Mr. Ambrose left us. He packed up his things and his books, and went away; and I understood, somehow, that he would not be coming back. I did not ask where he was going, nor why he was going. His departure, like his presence, was a fact which I accepted without curiosity. Not without satisfaction, though; it was distinctly nice to feel that the house was rid of him.

And then seven or eight years passed, the longest seven or eight years, I suppose, that one is likely ever to encounter, the seven or eight

eight years in the course of which one grows from a child of ten or eleven to a youth approaching twenty. And during those years I had plenty of other things to think of than Mr. Ambrose. It was time more than enough for him to become a mere dim outline on the remote horizon.

My childish conception of the man, as you perceive, was sufficiently rudimental. He represented to me the incarnation of a single principle : severity ; as I, no doubt, represented to him the incarnation of vexatious noise. For the rest, we overlooked each other. I had been told that he was one of the greatest and wisest and best men in the world : you have seen how little that mattered to me. It would probably have mattered quite as little if the information had been more specific, if I had been told everything there was to tell about him, all that I have learned since. How could it have mattered to a child to know that the testy old man who sat in his room all day and wrote, and every evening received a stream of shabby visitors, was the prophet of a new social faith, the founder of a new sect, the author of a new system for the regeneration of mankind, of a new system of human government, a new system of ethics, a new system of economics ? What could such a word as "anthropocracy" have conveyed to me ? Or such a word as "philarchy" ? Or such a phrase as "Unification *versus* Civilisation" ?

My childish conception of the man was extremely rudimental. But I saw a good deal of him again when I was eighteen, nineteen ; and at eighteen, nineteen, one begins, more or less, to observe and appreciate, to receive impressions and to form conclusions. Anyhow,

how, the impressions I received of Mr. Ambrose, the conclusions I formed respecting him, when I was eighteen or nineteen, are still very fresh in my mind ; and I can't help believing that on the whole they were tolerably just. I think they were just, because they seem to explain him ; they seem to explain him in big and in little. They explain his career, his failure, his table manners, his testiness, his disregard of other people's rights and feelings, his apparent selfishness ; they explain the queerest of the many queer things he did. They explain his taking the bank the other night at baccarat, for instance ; and they explain what happened afterwards, before the night was done.

One evening, when I was eighteen or nineteen, coming home from the Latin Quarter, where I was a student, to dine with my people, in the Rue Oudinot, I found Mr. Ambrose in the drawing-room. Or, if you will, I found a stranger in the drawing-room, but a stranger whom it took me only a minute or two to recognise. My father, at my entrance, had smiled, with a little air of mystery, and said to me, "Here is an old friend of yours. Can you tell who it is?" And the stranger, also—somewhat faintly—smiling, had risen, and offered me his hand. I looked at him—looked at him—and, in a minute, I exclaimed, "It's Mr. Ambrose!"

I can see him now almost as clearly as I saw him then, when he stood before me, faintly smiling: tall and thin, stooping a little, dressed in black, with a long broad beard, long hair, and a pale, worn, aquiline face. It is the face especially that comes back to me, pale and worn and finely aquiline, the face, the high white brow, the deep eyes set wide apart, the faint, faded smile: a striking face—an intellectual face—a handsome face, despite many wrinkles—an indescribably sad face, even a tragic face

face—and yet, for some reason, a face that was not altogether sympathetic. Something, something in it, had the effect rather of chilling you, of leaving you where you were, than of warming and attracting you: something hard to fix, perhaps impossible to name. A certain suggestion of remoteness, of aloofness? A suggestion of abstraction from his surroundings and his company, of inattention, of indifference, to them? Of absorption in matters alien to them, outside their sphere? I did not know. But there was surely something in his face not perfectly sympathetic.

I had exclaimed, "It's Mr. Ambrose!" To that he had responded, "Ah, you have a good memory." And then we shook hands, and he sat down again. His hand was thin and delicate, and slightly cold. His voice was a trifle dry, ungenial. Then he asked me the inevitable half-dozen questions about myself—how old I was, and what I was studying, and so forth; but though he asked them with an evident intention of being friendly, one felt that he was all the while half thinking of something else, and that he never really took in one's answers.

And gradually he seemed to become unconscious of my presence, resuming the conversation with my father, which, I suppose, had been interrupted by my arrival.

"The world has forgotten me. My followers have dropped away. You yourself—where is your ancient ardour? The cause I have lived for stands still. My propaganda is arrested. I am poor, I am obscure, I am friendless, and I am sixty-five years old. But the great ideals, the great truths, I have taught, remain. They are like gold which I have mined. There the gold lies, between the covers of my books, as in so many caskets. Some day, in its necessities, the world will find it. What is excellent cannot perish. It may lie hid, but it cannot perish."

That is one of the things I remember his saying to my father,

on

on that first evening of our renewed acquaintance. And, at table, I noticed, he ate and drank in a joyless, absent-minded manner, and made unusual uses of his knife and fork, and very unusual noises. And, by-and-by, in the midst of a silence, my mother spoke to a servant, whereupon, suddenly, he glanced up, with vague eyes, and the frown of one troubled in the depths of a brown study, and I could have sworn it was on the tip of his tongue to say *hist-hist!*

He stayed with us for several months—from the beginning of November till February or March, I think—and during that period I saw him very nearly every day, and heard him accomplish a tremendous deal of talk.

I tried, besides, to read some of his books, an effort, however, from which I retired, baffled and bewildered: they were a thousand miles above the apprehension of a nineteen-year-old *potache*; and I did actually read to its end a book about him: *Augustus Ambrose, the Friend of Man: an Account of his Life, and an Analysis of his Teachings. By one of his Followers. Turin: privately printed, 1858.* Of the identity of that "Follower," by-the-by, I got an inkling, from a rather conscious, half sheepish smile, which I detected in the face of my own father, when he saw the volume in my hands. I read his *Life* to its end; and I tried to read *The Foundations of Monopantology*, and *Anthropocracy: a Remedy for the Diseases of the Body Politic*, and *Philarchy: a Vision*; and I listened while he accomplished a tremendous deal of talk. His talk was always (for my taste) too impersonal; it was always of ideas, of theories, never of concrete things, never of individual men and women. Indeed, the mention of an individual would often only serve him as an excuse for a new flight into the abstract. For example, I
had

had learned, from the *Life*, that he had been an associate of Mazzini's and Garibaldi's in '48, and that it was no less a person than Victor Emmanuel himself, who had named him—in an official proclamation, too—"the Friend of Man." So, one day, I asked him to tell me something about Victor Emmanuel, and Mazzini, and Garibaldi. "You knew them. I should be so glad to hear about them from one who knew them."

"Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, Mazzini, Cavour—I knew them all; I knew them well. I worked with them, fought under them, wrote for them, spoke for them, throughout the long struggle for the unification of Italy. I did so because unification is my supreme ideal, the grandest ideal the human mind has ever formed. I worked for the unification of Italy, because I was and am working for the unification of mankind, and the unification of Italy was a step towards, and an illustration of, that sublime object. Let others prate of civilisation; civilisation means nothing more than the invention and multiplication of material conveniences—nothing more than that. But unification—the unification of mankind—that is the crusade which I have preached, the cause for which I have lived. To unify the scattered nations of this earth into one single nation, one single solidarity, under one government, speaking one language, professing and obeying one religion, pursuing one aim. The religion—Christianity, with a purified Papacy. The government—anthropocratic philarchy, the reign of men by the law of Love. The language—Albigo. Albigo, which means, at the same time, both human and universal—from Albi, pertaining to man, and Gom, pertaining to the whole, the all. Albigo: a language which I have discovered, as the result of years of research, to exist already, and everywhere, as the base, the common principle, of all known languages, and which I have extracted, in its
original

original simplicity, from the overgrowths which time and separateness have allowed to accumulate upon it. Albigo : the tongue which all men speak unconsciously : the universal human tongue. And, finally, the aim—the common, single aim—the highest possible spiritual development of man, the highest possible culture of the human soul.”

That is what I received in response to my request for a few personal reminiscences of Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, and Mazzini.

You will infer that Mr. Ambrose lacked humour. But his most conspicuous trait, his preponderant trait—the trait which, I think, does more than any other to explain him, him and his fortunes and his actions—was the trait I had vaguely noticed in our first five minutes’ intercourse, after my re-introduction to him ; the trait which, I have conjectured, perhaps gave its unsympathetic quality to his face : abstraction from his surroundings and his company, inattention, indifference, to them.

On that first evening, you may remember, he had asked me certain questions ; but I had felt that he was thinking of something else. I had answered them, but I had felt that he never heard my answers.

That little negative incident, I believe, gives the key to his character, to his fortunes, to his actions.

The Friend of Man was totally deaf and blind and insensible to *men*. Man, as a metaphysical concept, was the major premiss of his philosophy ; men, as individuals, he was totally unable to realise. He could not see you, he could not hear you, he could get no “realising sense” of you. You spoke, but your voice was an unintelligible murmur in his ears ; it was like the sound of the wind—it might annoy him, disturb him (in which case he would seek to silence it with a *hist-hist*), it could not signify to him.

You stood up, in front of him ; but you were invisible to him ; he saw beyond you. And even when *he* spoke, he did not speak to you, he spoke to the walls and ceiling—he thought aloud. He took no account of his auditor's capacities, of the subject that would interest him, of the language he would understand. You asked him to tell you about Mazzini, and he discoursed of Albigo and the Unification of Mankind. And then, when he ceased to speak, directly he fell silent and somebody else took the word, the gates of his mind were shut ; he withdrew behind them, returned to his private meditations, and so remained, detached, solitary, preoccupied, till the time came when he was moved to speak again. He was the Friend of Man, but men did not exist for him. He was like a mathematician busied with a calculation, eager for the sum-total, but heedless of the separate integers. My father—my mother—I—whosoever approached him—was a phantasm : a convenient phantasm, possibly, a phantasm with a house where he might be lodged and fed, with a purse whence might be supplied the funds requisite for the publication of his works ; or possibly a troublesome phantasm, a phantasm that worried him by shouting at its play : but a phantasm, none the less.

Years ago, my downright Aunt Elizabeth had disposed of him with two words : a charlatan, an impostor. My Aunt Elizabeth was utterly mistaken. Mr. Ambrose's sincerity was absolute. The one thing he professed belief in, he believed in with an intensity that rendered him unconscious of all things else ; his one conviction was so predominant as to exclude all other convictions. What was the one thing he believed in, the one thing he was convinced of ? It would be easy to reply, himself ; to declare that, at least, when she had called him an egotist, my Aunt Elizabeth had been right. It would be easy, but I am sure it would be untrue. The thing he believed in, the thing he was convinced of,

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the only thing in this whole universe which he saw, was his vision. That, I am persuaded, is the explanation of the man. It explains him in big and in little. It explains his career, his fortunes, his failure, his table-manners, his testiness, and the queerest of his actions.

He saw nothing in this universe but his vision ; he did not see the earth beneath him, nor the people round him. Is that not enough to explain everything, almost to justify anything ? Doesn't it explain his failure, for example ? The fact that the world ignored him, that his followers dropped away from him, that nobody read his books ? For, since he was never convinced of the world, how could he convince the world ? Since he had no "realising sense" of men, how could he hold men ? Can you hold phantasms ? Since, in writing his books, he took no account of human nature, no account of human taste, human desires, needs, endurance, no account of the structure of the human brain, of human habits of thought, of the motives by which human beings can be influenced, of the arguments they can follow, of the language they can understand—since, in a word, he wrote his books, as he spoke his speeches, not to you or me, not to flesh and blood, but to the walls and ceiling, to space, to the unpeopled air—how was it possible that he should have human readers ? It explains his failure, the failure of a long life of unremitting labour. He was learned, he was in earnest, he was indefatigable ; and the net product of his learning, his earnestness, his industry, was nil ; because there can be no reciprocity established between something and nothing.

It explains his failure ; and it explains—it almost excuses—in a sense it even almost justifies—the queerest of his actions. Other people did not exist for him ; therefore other people had no feelings to be considered, no rights, no possessions, to be respected. They did not exist, therefore they were in no way to be reckoned with.

with. Their observation was not to be avoided, their power was not to be feared. They could not *do* anything; they could not see what *he* did.

The queerest of his actions? You will suppose that I must have some very queer action still to record. Well, there was his action the other night at the Casino, for one thing; I haven't yet done with that. But the queerest of all his actions, I think, was his treatment of Israela, his step-daughter Israela. . . .

During the visit Mr. Ambrose paid us in Paris, when I was nineteen, he, whose early disciples had dropped away, made a new disciple: a Madame Fontanas, a Mexican woman—of Jewish extraction, I imagine—a widow, with a good deal of money. Israela, her daughter, was a fragile, pale-faced, dark-haired, great-eyed little girl, of twelve or thirteen. Madame Fontanas sat at Mr. Ambrose's feet, and listened, and believed. Perhaps she conceived an affection for him; perhaps she only thought that here was a great philosopher, a great philanthropist, and that he ought to have some one to take permanent care of him, and reduce the material friction of his path to a minimum. Anyhow, when the spring came, she married him. I have no definite information on the subject, but I am sure in my own mind that it was she who took the initiative—that she offered, and he vaguely accepted, her hand. Anyhow, in the spring she married him, and carried him off to her Mexican estates.

Five or six years later (by the sheerest hazard) I found him living in London with Israela; in the dreariest of dreary lodgings, in a dreary street, in Pimlico. I met him one afternoon, by the sheerest hazard, in Piccadilly, and accompanied him home. (It was characteristic of him, by-the-by, that, though we met face to face,

face, and I stopped and exclaimed and held out my hand, he gazed at me with blank eyes, and I was obliged to repeat my name twice before he could recall me.) He was living in London, for the present, he told me, in order to see a work through the press. "A great work, the crown, the summary of all my work. *The Final Extensions of Monopantology*. It is in twelve volumes, with plates, coloured plates."

"And Mrs. Ambrose is well?" I asked.

"Oh, my wife—my wife is dead. She died two or three years ago," he answered, with the air of one dismissing an irrelevance.

"And Israela?" I pursued, by-and-by.

"Israela?" His brows knitted themselves perplexedly, then, in an instant, cleared. "Oh, Israela. Ah, yes. Israela is living with me."

And upon my suggesting that I should like to call upon her, he replied that he was on his way home now, and, if I cared to do so, I might come with him.

They were living in the dreariest of dreary lodgings, in the dreariest of streets. But Israela welcomed me with a warmth I had not anticipated. "Oh, I am so glad to see you, so glad, so glad," she cried, and her big, dark eyes filled with tears, and she clung to my hand. I was surprised by her emotion, because, after all, I was scarcely other than a stranger to her; a man she hadn't seen since she was a little girl, and even then had seen only once or twice. I understood it afterwards, however: when one day she confided to me that—excepting Mr. Ambrose himself, and servants and tradesmen—I was the first human being she had exchanged a word with since they had come to London! "We don't know anybody—not a soul, not a soul. He doesn't want to know people—he is so absorbed in his work. I could not make acquaintances alone."

alone. And we had been here four months, before he met you and brought you home."

Israela was tall, and very slight ; very delicate-looking, with a face intensely pale, all the paler for the soft dark hair that curled above it, and the great dark eyes that looked out of it. Considering that she must have inherited a decent fortune from her mother, I wondered, rather, to see her so plainly dressed : she wore the plainest straight black frocks. And, of course, I wondered also to find them living in such dismal lodgings. However, it was not for me to ask questions ; and if presently the mystery cleared itself up, it was by a sort of accident.

I called at the house in Pimlico as often as I could ; and I took Israela out a good deal, to lunch or dine at restaurants ; and when the weather smiled, we would make little jaunts into the country, to Hampton Court, or Virginia Water, or where not. And one day she came to tea with me, at my chambers.

"Oh, you've got a piano," was her first observation, and she flew to the instrument, and seated herself, and began to play. She played without pause for nearly an hour, I think : Chopin, Chopin, Chopin. And when she rose, I said, "Would you mind telling me why you—a brilliant pianist like you—why you haven't a piano in your own rooms ?"

"We can't afford one," she answered simply.

"What do you mean—you can't afford one ?"

"He says we can't afford one. Don't you know—we are very poor ?"

"You can't be very poor," I exclaimed. "Your mother was rich."

"Yes, my mother was rich. I don't know what has become of her money."

"Didn't she leave a will ?"

"Oh,

"Oh, yes, she left a will. She left a will making my step-father my guardian, my trustee."

"Well, what has he done with your money?"

"I don't know. I only know that we are very poor—that we can't afford any luxuries—that we can just barely contrive to live, in the quietest manner. He almost never gives me any money for myself. A few shillings, very rarely, when I ask him."

"My dear child," I cried, "I see it all, I see it perfectly. You've got plenty of money, you've got your mother's fortune. But he's spending it for his own purposes. He's paying for the printing of his gigantic book with it. Twelve volumes, and plates, coloured plates! It's exactly like him. The only thing he's conscious of is the importance of publishing his book. He needs money. He takes it where he finds it. He's spending your money for the printing of his book; and that's why you have to live in dreary lodgings in the dreariest part of London, and do without a piano. *He* doesn't care how he lives—he doesn't know—he's unconscious of everything but his book. My dear child, you must stop him, you mustn't let him go on."

Israela was incredulous at first, but I argued and insisted, till, in the end, she said, "Perhaps you are right. But even so, what can I do? How can I stop him?"

"Ah, that's a question for a lawyer. We must see a lawyer. A lawyer will know how to stop him."

But at this proposal, Israela shook her head. "Oh, no, I will have no lawyer. Even supposing your idea is true, I can't set a lawyer upon my mother's husband. After all, what does it matter? Perhaps he is right. Perhaps the publication of his book *is* very important. I'm sure my mother would have thought so. It was her money. Perhaps he is right to spend it for the publication of his book."

Israella positively declined to consult a lawyer; and so they continued to live narrowly in Pimlico, and he proceeded with the issue of *The Final Extensions of Monopantology*, in twelve volumes, with coloured plates. Meanwhile, the brown London autumn had turned into a black London winter; and Israella, delicate-looking at its outset, grew more and more delicate-looking every day.

"After all, what does it matter? The money will be his, and he can do as he wishes with it honestly, as soon as I am dead," she said to me, one evening, with a smile I did not like.

"What on earth do you mean?" I asked.

"I am going to die," she said.

"You're mad, your morbid," I cried. "You musn't say such things. You're not *ill*? What on earth do you mean?"

"I am going to die. I know it. I feel it. I am not ill? I don't know. I think I am ill. I feel as if I were going to be ill. I am going to die—I know I am going to die."

I did what I could to dissipate such black presentiments. I refused to talk of them. I did what I could to lend a little gaiety to her life. But Israella grew whiter and more delicate-looking day by day. I was her only visitor. I had asked if I might not bring a friend or two to see her, but she had answered, "I'm afraid he would not like it. People coming and going would disturb him. He can't bear any noise." So I was her only visitor—till, by-and-by, another became necessary.

I wonder whether Mr. Ambrose ever really knew that Israella was lying in her bed at the point of death, and that the man who called twice every day to see her was a doctor? True, in an absent-minded fashion, he used to enquire how she was, he used even occasionally to enter the sick-room, and look at her, and lay his hand on her brow, as if to take her temperature; but I wonder whether

whether he ever actually *realised* her condition ? He was terribly pre-occupied just then with Volume VIII. At all events, on a certain melancholy morning in April, he allowed me to conduct him to a carriage and to help him in ; and together we drove to Kensal Green. He was silent during the drive—thinking hard, I fancied, about some matter very foreign to our errand. . . . And as soon as the parson there had rattled through his office and concluded it, Israela's step-father pulled out his watch, and said to me, "Ah, I must hurry off, I must hurry off. I've got a long day's work before me still."

That was something like ten years ago—the last time I had seen him. . . . Until now, to-night, on this sultry night of August 1896, here he had suddenly reappeared to me, holding the bank at baccarat, at the Grand Cercle of the Casino : Augustus Ambrose, the Friend of Man, the dreamer, the visionary, holding the bank at baccarat, at the Grand Cercle of the Casino !

I looked at him, in simple astonishment at first, and then gradually I shaped a theory. "He has probably come pretty nearly to the end of Israela's fortune ; it would be like him to spend interest and principal as well. And now he finds himself in need of money. And he is just unpractical enough to fancy that he can supply his needs by play. Or—or is it possible he has a system ? Perhaps he imagines he has a system." And then I thought how old he had grown, how terribly, terribly he had decayed.

I looked at him. He was dealing. He dealt to the right, to the left, and to himself. But when he glanced at his own two cards, he made a little face. The next instant he had dropped them under the table, and helped himself to two fresh ones . . .

The

The thing was done without the faintest effort at concealment, in a room where at least forty pairs of eyes were fixed upon him.

There was, of course, an immediate uproar. In an instant every one was on his feet ; Mr. Ambrose was surrounded. Men were shaking their fists in his face, screaming at him excitedly, calling him ugly names. He gazed at them placidly, vaguely. It was clear he did not grasp the situation.

Somebody must needs intervene.

"I saw what Monsieur did. I am sure it was with no ill intention. He made no effort at concealment. It was done in a fit of absence of mind. Look at him. He is a very old man. You can see he is bewildered. He does not even yet understand what has happened. He should never have come here, at his age. He should never have been allowed to take the bank. Let the croupier pay both sides. Then I will take Monsieur away."

Somehow I got him out of the Casino, and led him to his hotel, a small hotel in the least favoured quarter of the town, the name of which I had a good deal of difficulty in extracting from him. On the way thither scarcely a word passed between us. I forbore to tell him who I was ; of course, he did not recognise me. But all the while a pertinacious little voice within me insisted : "He did it deliberately. He deliberately tried to cheat. With his gaze concentrated on his vision, he could see nothing else ; he could see no harm in trying to cheat at cards. He needed money—it didn't matter how he obtained it. The other players were phantasms—where's the harm in cheating phantasms ? Only he forgot—or, rather, he never realised—that the phantasms had eyes, that they could *see*. That's why he made no effort at concealment."—Was the voice right or wrong ?

I parted with him at the door of his hotel ; but the next day a feeling grew within me that I ought to call upon him, that I ought

ought at least to call and take his news. They told me that he had left by an early train for Paris.

As I have been writing these last pages, a line of Browning's has kept thrumming through my head. "This high man, with a great thing to pursue . . . This high man, with a great thing to pursue . . ." How does it apply to Mr. Ambrose? I don't know—unless, indeed, a high man, with a great thing to pursue, is to be excused, is to be pitied, rather than blamed, if he loses his sense, his conscience, of other things, of small things. After all, wasn't it because he lost his conscience of small things, that he missed his great thing?

John Barlas's Poetry

By Henry S. Salt

Critics of the present phase of democracy in England have remarked that, whatever else it may have produced, it has not produced poets. The judgment is only partly true. It is true that the lines on which the "social question" is nowadays argued are largely scientific; the battle is one of economics rather than heroics, and the atmosphere of economics is not inspiring to singers. Therefore, as might have been expected, song has not played anything like the same part in the Socialist as in the Chartist propaganda, or as in the Irish struggle of the Forties; there have been no popular song-writers at all comparable to those who inspired the enthusiasts of half a century ago. On the other hand it must be remembered that in democratic poetry, even more than in other poetry, the really original writers—those who aim at something beyond an expression of the common sentiments of their comrades—are apt to be unrecognised, or very slowly recognised, by contemporary opinion; so that the literature of a social movement still in course of development may turn out to be more important than at first sight appears.

For example, at the present time, very few of the "reading public," and perhaps not many of the "leading critics" (leading, in the sense of the blind leading the blind), know anything at all
of

of such very notable poems as Edward Carpenter's "Towards Democracy" and Francis Adams's "Songs of the Army of the Night," two powerful and characteristic works alone sufficient to distinguish the period that produced them. But even under such conditions, it seems strange that the poetry of John E. Barlas ("Evelyn Douglas") is read and valued by none but a few fellow-enthusiasts. For, as a set-off against the disadvantage of obscure publication, Barlas's style, unlike that of Carpenter and Adams, is not, externally at least, a novel or unfamiliar one, but is framed on established literary canons; so that there should have been one obstacle the less to a recognition of his rich and brilliant genius.

Of all rebels against the existing state of society, none perhaps are so irreconcilable as the passionate lovers of beauty and nature who, like Richard Jefferies, are for ever contrasting the actual with the ideal, the serfdom of the present with the freedom of the years to come. It is to this order of heart and mind, children of a golden past or a golden future, that Barlas belongs. He is, if ever poet was, a Greek in spirit, but he possesses also, in a high degree, the modern sense of brotherhood with all that lives. A fiery impatience of privilege, authority, commercialism, breathes through all his writings; and therefore, like all poets who have held these burning thoughts, he is lonely, a stranger, an exile, as it were, from some Hid Isle of Beauty, who has been stranded on savage shores. This marked characteristic, the isolation of a proud but loving heart, will not be overlooked by any careful student of the eight small volumes of verse published by Barlas between 1884 and 1893.*

It is in the earliest and the latest of these volumes that, in my
opinion,

* All of these books are more or less difficult to obtain. The British Museum has a complete set. Mr. F. Kirk, 42 Melbourn Street, Leicester, has some of the volumes on sale.

opinion, he is seen at his best. The *Poems Lyrical and Dramatic*, which appeared in 1884, but were written at various dates from 1877 onward, are indeed in many ways imperfect, but the author's apology for the immaturity of these "February flowers" was not needed; if immature, they are still flowers of which any lyric poet might be proud, and they could have been grown in no other garden than that wherein they stand. The influence of other poets, Shelley and Swinburne and Poe, for instance, may be noted in this early work; but the resemblance is only a superficial one, and there is no mistaking the originality of the thought and workmanship, the deep heartfelt humanity by which the poems are informed, or the gorgeous tropical splendour of the imagery and diction. There are stanzas in "The Golden City," "The River's Pilgrimage," "Ode to Euterpe," and elsewhere, which are steeped in a rich fantasy of feeling and colour quite peculiar to Barlas, and not to be surpassed, in its own way, in all the range of our literature. Witness the following verses from "The Golden City":

"I dreamed once of a city
Of marble and of gold,
Where pity melts to pity
And love for love is sold,
Where hot light smokes and shivers
Round endless sweeps of rivers,
A home of high endeavours
For the stately men of old. . . .

And under tower and temple,
By minarets and domes,
With burning waves a-tremble
The stately river foams,

Lapping

Lapping the granite arches
Of the bridges, while it marches
Through rows of limes and larches,
By many hearths and homes.

By buttresses and basements
And pillared colonnade,
By open doors and casements
In festal wreaths arrayed,
By stair and terrace wending
In windings without ending,
Sunlight or moonlight blending
With massy squares of shade.

By gardens full of fountains
And statues white as snow,
Nymphs of the seas and mountains.
And goddesses a-row,
Where the deep heart of the roses
Its secret sweet uncloses,
And the scent, like heat, reposes
On the beds that bask and glow."

If it be thought that this is mere "word-painting," take the passionate cry for rest and healing from "Santa Cecilia," surely one of the most true and beautiful lyrics in modern English song :

"Ah Santa Cecilia
Touch me and heal me,
Me, storm-swept, even me,
Beyond life's utmost sea ;
Kiss me and seal me,
Santa Cecilia.

John Barlas's Poetry

Sweet music and melody,
Ye only left me
Far to my heart outweigh
Love, hope, faith, reason's ray,
All things bereft me,
Music and melody. . . .

Ah Santa Cecilia,
Never forsake me,
In white calm and white storm,
Cold winds and weathers warm,
Let thy voice wake me,
Santa Cecilia.

Sweet music and melody,
Take me and lift me
Above where baser tides
Under sheer mountain-sides
Drive me and drift me,
Music and melody.

Ah Santa Cecilia,
Touch me and heal me,
Me, storm-swept, even me,
Beyond life's utmost sea ;
Kiss me and seal me,
Santa Cecilia."

Nor is this youthful volume wanting in poems which show a firm grip and a power of concentrated expression. In all that poets have written of Freedom, it would be difficult to find a nobler picture than the following from "Le Jeune Barbaroux" :

"Freedom,

“Freedom, her arm outstretched but lips firm set,
Freedom, her eyes with tears of pity wet,
But her robe splashed with drops of bloody dew,
Freedom, thy goddess, is our goddess yet,
Young Barbaroux.

Freedom, that tore the robe from kings away,
That clothed the beggar-child in warm array,
Freedom, the hand that raised, the hand that slew,
Freedom, divine then, is divine to-day,
Young Barbaroux.

We drown, we perish in a surging sea ;
We are not equal, brotherly, nor free ;—
Who from this death shall stoop and raise us ? who ?
Thy Freedom, and the memory of such as thee,
Young Barbaroux.”

In the volumes that succeeded these early *Poems*, it would seem that John Barlas, in his characteristic recoil from the ugliness of modern realities, lapsed too far in the contrary direction of poetical mysticism. His *Phantasmagoria*, or *Dream-Fugues*, is a wonderful attempt at depicting, with huge prodigality of language and metaphor, his haunting sense of a strange vast dreamland, in which, as in De Quincey's opium-visions, the colossal features of the East loom vague and portentous.

“Hast not sailed in dreams upon a mystic river
Through caverns, and through mountains, and through palaces ?
Seen the sunrays fall, the moonbeams quiver,
On the roofs of Tripolis and Fez :

Drifted far 'mid many a granite column,
Through the brazen gates, on waves that shone,
In the awful hush of moonrise soft and solemn,
Into Babylon ?

Hast thou never strayed through China's mystic regions,
Lamplit gardens cool with waft of many a fan,
Seen their silken girls in silver legions,
Or the gorgeous ladies of Japan,
Heard the small feet patter, long robes sweeping,
Kissed the laughing lips, shocked as it seemed ?—
Ah, thou hast not known the joys of sleeping,
Thou hast never dreamed !”

There is a turbid excess of imagery in these weird fantasies that somehow mars their effect. A similar, but worse exaggeration of tone and treatment is noticeable in the two dramas, *Punchinello and his wife Judith* and *The Queen of the Hid Isle*, which, in spite of some very beautiful lines and passages, quite fail to realise their author's high conception of the subjects chosen by him. Lack of humour, which in a dream-fugue can perhaps be tolerated, since dreamland is not often humorous, is fatal to a drama ; and much that is over-wrought and feeble-forcible in this part of Barlas's work is due to this deficiency. That he possessed any of the essential qualities of a dramatist will hardly be asserted, even by those who most admire the richness of his lyrics ; but humour would at least have saved him from the mannerisms and affectations which make the reading of his dramas a somewhat weary task.

But when we leave his blank verse behind us, and turn to the later lyrics and sonnets of 1887-1889, there is a change indeed ; for in this maturer work there is all the fire of the youthful poems,
but

but purged and clarified into a calmness and simplicity of expression which lend it new strength. This increased power, which is first observable in the charming little volume of *Bird-notes* (1887), is seen at its best in the *Songs of a Bayadere* (1893), from which I take the following lyric entitled "The Mummy's Love-Story," a masterpiece of passionate feeling clothed in simplest words :

"Where in a stone sarcophagus
Lay in embalmed repose
A shape with robes luxurious,
They found a faded rose.

Perhaps it was an amorous boy
That to a princess gave
Some token of their secret joy,
That she wore to the grave.

Perhaps it was a murdered youth
Sent on the eve of doom
An emblem of forgiving truth,
His queen wore to the tomb.

Who knows? But there it speaks for her
Of sorrows long past now,
When neither joy nor pain can stir
The arch of her calm brow.

And so, when you have let me die,
And you too are at rest,
Some trinket of my gift may lie
On your repentant breast.

And

John Barlas's Poetry

And when our language is forgot,
Some lover of old scenes
May find it in a haunted spot,
And wonder what it means."

But it is in the Sonnet, perhaps, that Barlas's genius reaches its fullest development. I speak advisedly when I say that his sequence of *Love Sonnets* (1889), quite unknown as it is to ninety-nine out of a hundred readers of poetry, deserves to take rank, and will some day take rank, with the greatest sonnet-structures of the century. For serenity of tone, mastery of style, and deep personal pathos, it would be hard to surpass many of the sonnets in this book, which has drawn from no less an authority than George Meredith the opinion that, in this form of writing, Barlas "takes high rank among the poets of his time." Here is the concluding sonnet of the series, which as Mr. Meredith justly observes, is "unmatched for nobility of sentiment, and the workmanship is adequate."

"When in the lonely stillness of the tomb
I voiceless lie and cold, omit not thou
To sing and dance as merrily as now :
Bring roses once a year in fullest bloom,
And rather than that thou should'st come in gloom,
Bring thy new love with thee : together bow
O'er the green mound that hides the quiet brow—
Yea I would bless his babe within thy womb.
How can love be where jealousy is not ?
How shall I say ? This only : I have borne
That cruel pain : yet would I never blot,
Living, with selfish love the loved one's lot,
Nor, dead, would have my dear love live forlorn,—
Yet would not wish my own love quite forgot."

In

In speaking of a writer who is practically unknown, I have been compelled to trust in large measure to quotation. The passages quoted, though in themselves but brief and fragmentary, will at least have given some indication of the qualities that distinguish their author—a rare splendour of imagination and melody of utterance ; a spirit of intense devotion to beauty and freedom, intense hatred of oppression and wrong, which rises, in his latest poems, through unrest of pain and disappointment, to a note of high calm unselfishness, “a great peace growing up within the soul,” which few poets have attained to. In the words of one of his noblest sonnets :

“ Yet love, for thee, yet, love, for thy dear grace,
I walk in dreams as toward the morning star,
Through clouds that shine and open out above ;
And all the future flames about my face,
And all the past lies looming low afar
To me emerging on the heights of love.”

Indirectly, too, what has been quoted may have given some faint hint of the self-revelation that every true poet perforce leaves in his verses, intelligible to those only who can read between the lines with sympathy and understanding—in this case a sad record of a troubled life, now prematurely darkened by disease. Of one thing the reader has absolute conviction, that no singer was ever more true to his faith and his vocation ; though, as he himself cries in his ode to his goddess, Euterpe :

“ To me thou hast given the pangs, and the chaplet of
bay-leaf withheld.”

That the homage due to the great heart of a real poet will be
permanently

permanently denied to John Barlas, I do not believe ; and even as I have been writing this short article, designed to draw attention, however inadequately, to a neglected fount of song, has come the welcome news that a volume of selections from his poems is about to be laid before the public. No more interesting book of verse will have appeared for many a year.

The White Statue

By Olive Custance

I LOVE you, silent statue : for your sake
My songs in prayer up-reach
Frail hands of flame-like speech,
That some mauve-silver twilight you make wake !

I love you more than swallows love the south.
As sunflowers turn and turn
Towards the sun, I yearn
To press warm lips against your cold white mouth.

I love you more than scarlet-skirted dawn,
At sight of whose spread wings
The great world wakes and sings,
Forgetful of the long vague dark withdrawn.

* * * *

I love you most at purple sunseting,
When night with feverish eyes
Comes up the fading skies. . . .
I love you with a passion past forgetting !

Two Pictures

By Charles Conder

I. Recreations of Cupid

II. A Romance





Scarlet Runners

By James S. Pyke-Nott

THIS is the story of a house—its history.

It was a well-kept house when first I knew it, big—for a house of this kind—and very imposing; and it was very commonly said that many persons would give their eyes to possess it. But the persons who were thus talked about never thought of it as a house at all; and they couldn't have got inside it, even if they had wished to get there, which they never thought of wishing; so it is difficult to understand why they wanted it, for as a mere ornament it was too large and too unmanageable. I speak of it simply as a house, because I am trying to be charitable, and I believe that up to the very last it was a comfortable place to live in—very safe, and always well stored with provisions. I will tell about those who lived in it after I have explained what a really wonderful house it was, for then its inmates will be less surprising. It could move, even when not on wheels, and frequently did so move; and once it moved astonishingly fast—and I will tell about that too in a little while. Yes, it was wonderfully built: what wonderful machinery it had! and how wonderfully the machinery kept in order!

This house, like all houses of its kind, was haunted. It did not look haunted, very few houses that are in good repair do; for
ghosts

ghosts have many affectations, and with them it is unfashionable to appear in houses that are not dilapidated : also many of them are shy, and some are proud, and others are sleepy, so, when a house comes alongside another house, their ghosts as a rule sit quite still and content themselves with listening to the conversation of the houses. But those whom the stories are mostly told about are of course the more eager and restless spirits, who can be seen looking out through the windows of their houses, and are often accompanied by strange lights. Some of these are affectionate ghosts, who long to know their fellow ghosts, and to be understood by them ; and many sad stories are told about these ghosts.

It is pleasant to sit and talk of ghosts. None of our stern wise elders can come and vex us with certificated knowledge : we get to know each other, and that is a great matter, and a very difficult matter, for generations of wise men have constructed cases for us, and written out labels to be stuck on us, and classified all our thoughts ; and wise men of the present come round and say, " Ah, yes ; this is a thing we thoroughly understand." And that is hateful, and it is absurd ; for we are really ghosts—we are like those of whom I have spoken, of whom the sad stories are told.

We will talk no more of ghosts, or we shall sleep less soundly than we ought to sleep—and I promised to tell about the inmates of this haunted house. They were not at all troubled by their ghost ; but then they were many, and they spent all their time in dancing. I never knew exactly how many they were, it would not have been easy to count them. Night and day they danced down the corridors and up the passages, and through a hall where a wonderful machine beat out the time for them, and seized them as they approached and whirled them round and sent them off
again

again down the corridors, and that was great fun. It was never very light in any part of the dwelling—if that could be called a dwelling where nobody dwelt for an instant, for these people even slept dancing—but they could see each other quite well, for they were all dressed in scarlet.

They must have been fond of dancing, and certainly there was plenty of company, but I think they found it monotonous, for whenever they found a crack in the walls they at once forced their way out into the open, although they always died immediately. But these sad occurrences were rare, for, as I have said, this was an unusually safe house to live in ; it was quite distressed when it saw its inmates rush out and die, and so it did its very best to keep from being injured.

One day a great battle was fought between the houses of two neighbouring countries, and soon so much smoke arose that it became difficult to see what was going on ; but the matter did not end in smoke, for many houses were destroyed, and many were grievously damaged. And this house was present at the first : and this is the story I promised to tell. Perhaps it could not help being present, and certainly as soon as the hostile houses hove in sight it thought of its inmates and the danger into which it was bringing them ; but it did not fully realise the cruelty of remaining where it was until the approaching houses began to open fire, and then it determined to remain there no longer. Yes, it had wonderful machinery ! It was a splendid house to live in.

Nevertheless these bright little dancers came to a woeful and untimely end. Years went by and they still danced on in safety, but danger often lurked outside now ; and their house outside looked less and less desirable—nobody wished to possess it any longer. And one day there was a violent jerk and then some of
the

the passages became blocked, and then the company began to crowd upon each other. The measure died out: silence and stillness settled throughout the place; the dancers rested in crushed heaps.

 Their house had been hanged.

The Elsingfords

By Robert Shews

I

IT was a marriage of which everybody augured ill. When a rumour of the engagement first obtained currency, everybody scoffed. It was impossible. And even after it had received official confirmation, people couldn't shake off a sort of dazed incredulity. It must be some mistake. That any one in his senses should voluntarily espouse Hennie Bleck was a proposition which the mind refused to grasp, like a contradiction in terms; and of Herbert Elsingford it had always been felt that he was peculiarly in his senses. He gave you the impression of a man who, fastidious in all things, would be overwhelmingly so in his choice of a wife. He was an artist, and he was a man of the world; he had travelled, he had knocked about; he must have had a varied experience of women, he must have had successes. With that, and with his humour, his saving touch of cynicism, one would have thought him the least likely of subjects for a woman to make a fool of. One would have supposed that he cultivated an unattainable feminine standard, that he would require a combination of qualities such as never was on land or sea—the qualities of a Grecian urn united to those of a rosebud. One would

would have imagined that in looking for a wife he would meet with the fortune of those who look for the absolute—and remain a bachelor. It was hard to believe that he was going to marry Hennie Bleck.

The Blecks, mother and daughter, had descended upon London, out of their native New England, some two years before. They had taken a furnished house near Portman Square, and proceeded, to the wonder of all beholders, to wriggle themselves into rather a decent set. Physically, they resembled each other as closely as two halfpence, with a difference of twenty years in their dates. Mamma Bleck was undersized and thin, with a nose like a scimitar, little staring grey eyes, a high forehead, and scanty grey hair. Miss Bleck was simply her newer replica. They were both addicted to odd, weasel-like motions, walked sinuously, and squirmed a good deal when seated. But their methods in conversation were antipodal. Mrs. Bleck was humble, distressingly so; talked but little, and that little under her breath, in a weary, low-spirited nasal. She deferred constantly to your opinion, and called you *sir*: “Oh, yes, sir,” “No, sir,” etc., with the funniest upward intonation. You would have thought she was trying, in a hopeless way, to sell you something; and, from her timidity of attack, you might have suspected a guilty consciousness that the thing wasn’t worth your money, that the goods were damaged, and a terror lest you should discover it and denounce her. Then she was prone to long melancholic lapses of silence, during which, by imperceptible degrees,—by a sort of drifting process,—she would edge away, abstract herself, till by-and-by you perceived that she was far from you, silent in a corner. But through her humility you felt a kind of truculence, of sly fierceness, as if she were lying low, and would presently seize her chance to give you a dab, and escape before you could make sure who had done

done it. In her corner, with her dull little eyes fixed steadfastly on nothing, she had the air of hatching a conspiracy—laying a mine. She was possibly only fatigued, and wondering when you would go. Mrs. Bleck was retiring; but Miss Bleck was forward enough for two—most affable, most condescending. She talked in a shrill little voice, and at the top of it, so that you could follow her observations from the other end of the room. She laid down the law, and kept twisting her neck like a swan's. She patronised everybody; she would have patronised the Duke of Plaza-Toros, the Bank of England; and her eyes had a sinister little glitter, and her thin, straight lips a malicious little smile that made one really afraid of her.

It was a wonder what had brought them to England (they assured you that everything was better in America); it was a wonder how well they got on here. They were unattractive, undistinguished, unconnected, and they weren't rich. They lived pretentiously but shabbily, driving their income very hard—forcing a thousand a year to do the work of two or three. They spread their gilding out so thin that the plaster showed through. You were sure they starved their servants—a conviction that was strengthened by the circumstance that they were perpetually changing them. The same butler never answered your knock twice. Then they gave awful dinners, and kept a watch on you lest you should eat and drink too heartily; viands were whisked before your eyes, and you went away with the sense of a lost opportunity. Their afternoons at home were the painfulest functions in London. They were lavish with weak tea, but sparing of the milk and sugar, the bread and butter; and the little dish of sweetmeats lurking behind the tea-urn was never put into circulation unless a star arrived, and even then (I don't know how they managed it) nobody but the star got any. Everybody dis-
liked

liked them, everybody said nasty things about them, yet everybody visited and invited them. It was partly, I dare say, mere inertia. Push, and it shall be opened unto you. They pushed: Mamma silently,—furtively, as it were; Hennie aggressively, with an effect of asperity; both persistently—and people made way for them. It was partly mere inertia, it was partly a sort of dim fear. One dimly feared that if one resisted them they would *do* something. One divined in them latent resources, hidden potentialities for mischief. They could blast one's reputation by some particularly insidious slander, or even throw vitriol. So people received them and visited them, and took it out in saying nasty things—of them and to them. These they never resented, though it was conceivable that they noted them down.

One of their stars was the Dowager Lady Stoke, whose house they had rented—always a conspicuous figure on their day, having journeyed up from remote South Kensington, whither she had withdrawn into lodgings. It was suggested that her attendance might be a part of the lease; but *brooms* apparently were not, for on one occasion her ladyship was heard somewhat heatedly expostulating: "New brooms! But, my dears, brooms are never included in a furnished house. If I left my brooms it was through good nature. If you need new brooms, you'll have to buy 'em, or do without. Brooms, indeed!" Then there were the Wetherleighs, the Burtons, the Cavely-Browns. It was by Mrs. Burton that Hennie was presented; and at the Wetherleighs' one scarcely knew who was the hostess, Hennie was so much and so actively in the foreground—the first to hail your arrival, the last to speed your departure. Yet Mrs. Wetherleigh quite frankly detested her.

It was at the Wetherleighs' in an evil hour that she made the acquaintance of Herbert Elsingford, then in the flower of his sudden

sudden short-lived fame—the lion of the moment. He had come home from the East in February, and in April an exhibition of his pictures had been opened at a dealer's in Bond Street. The next one knew, his name was in all men's mouths. The critics, the painters, the connoisseurs, had begun it, and the public carried it on. The explanation was obvious—he had matter as well as manner. The connoisseurs admired his manner, which was original and effective ; his light touch, his avoidance of all but the salient, his clever brushwork. The public were captivated by the glimpses he gave them into an exotic civilisation, by his pretty Japanese ladies, his splendid temples, his bright delicate colours. He had an instant and extremely unusual success. He sold everything, and got no end of orders. This was well, for in his long apprenticeship he had eaten up his short patrimony. His father had been a rural dean in Shropshire. Herbert himself had set out to read for the Bar, but in his second term he thought better of it, and went to Paris to study art. We never really heard much of him again till he burst upon us in his sudden celebrity.

He was run after a good deal, I suppose ; but he spent a surprising amount of his time at the Wetherleighs', with whom he was distantly, loosely, connected. He met Hennie Bleck there in June or July. One would have predicted that he would go beyond us all in disliking her. He had humour ; he had experience ; he had a *petit air moqueur* ; he was the last man in the world to be taken in. At the same time, he had sensibilities—old-fashioned sensibilities. He justified the proverb that every artist is a bit of a woman. At the vulgar, the meretricious, he couldn't smile, he couldn't even shrug his shoulders ; his humour, which had helped him to detect it, abandoned him when it came to supporting it ; he shuddered and hurried away. He would be sure to know pinchbeck from gold, and to hate it. He would be

sure to dislike Hennie. In the autumn people began to say they were engaged. People said it and repudiated it as impossible in the same breath. After the banns were published, people groped helplessly for a theory. All sorts of wild surmises were launched. Could it be hypnotism? There was something uncanny about the Blecks. Could it be hypnotism, *envoûtement*, some nefarious magic? One could fancy them, the grey old mother, the tallow-faced little daughter, brewing a witch's broth and crooning murky incantations over it. Or blackmail? They had been staying in the same country houses, and Elsingford, perhaps, had secrets. He had lived so much abroad, and travelled in the East; and even those of us who stop at home sometimes have secrets. If Hennie had been rich—but she wasn't rich. It passed the limits of the human understanding. It had to be given up as one of the ultimate mysteries. Elsingford was eight-and-twenty. Hennie couldn't be a day under thirty.

Nobody felt it more keenly than Arthur Harvard, Hennie's Londonised compatriot. He had been as nearly as any one the discoverer of Elsingford. He had written articles about him in the Reviews, and preached his cult by word of mouth wherever he could find a listener. Then the two men, for all that there was a score of years between them, became tremendous friends. Everybody liked Elsingford: he was gentle, modest and amusing. Harvard had a genius for friendship; he put it all into his friendship for Elsingford. They were together a great deal, took long walks together, dined and lunched together, talked together till late into the night.

Harvard couldn't believe it, but it troubled him. Mrs. Cavely-Brown whispered it to him: "They say, you know, that Herbert Elsingford is going to marry Hennie Bleck." He never smiled again, for at least a fortnight. It couldn't be true, of course; and yet

yet it might be. It is the impossible that usually happens. And in that case something ought to be done; *he* ought to do something. Harvard was a man who took things seriously, and felt his responsibilities. We used to laugh at him a little and call him "fussy"; but I think we should have hit nearer the mark if we had called him conscientious. For a fortnight he wore a perplexed frown. At last Elsingford set his doubts at rest. He arrived in town from Selfield, the Wetherleighs' place in Derbyshire, and drove straight to Harvard's chambers.

"I want you to congratulate me," he said. "Miss Bleck has done me the honour to accept my hand."

Harvard pulled himself up.

"Ah? Indeed? Ah, yes, yes. I—I've heard something about this," he responded: there he paused. He felt his responsibilities—the responsibilities of friendship. It was, then, true. Therefore something must be done—something must be said. But the situation had its delicacies. Whatever he did, whatever he said, must be well considered. Now, to gain time, he asked: "Er—have you fixed a date?"

"Monday, the sixth of January, at St. George's, Hanover Square."

In the choice of a tabernacle Harvard felt Hennie's touch: it was characteristic.

"You're the first person I've told," Elsingford went on. "You see, we want you to lend a hand. We want you to give the bride away. Henrietta and her mother are very anxious. Of course, this is unofficial. Mrs. Bleck will ask you. You're their fellow-countryman and my especial friend."

"If I'm to take part in the ceremony, I'd much rather forbid the banns," it was on the tip of Harvard's tongue to answer, but he lacked nerve. "My dear fellow, it's—it's too great a compliment.

pliment. They ought—if they want an American—they ought to have the Ambassador,” was what he did answer.

“They don’t like the Ambassador ; they’re not on terms with the Embassy.”

“Well, but then—but then—the Consul,” suggested Harvard, losing his head.

“Oh, the Consul’s impossible. The Consul’s not a Nobody knows the Consul. Besides, anyhow, we want you. You’re the most distinguished American here. And we’re such chums.”

So poor Harvard, who had begun by saying that he must do something, ended by giving the bride away. For months afterwards he felt as if he had picked a pocket and couldn’t lay a haunting dread of the consequences.

The whole affair was inexplicable ; and not the least inexplicable feature of it was the departure, immediately after the ceremony, of Elsingford, with his wife and mother-in-law, for dear old Amurica. We had never understood the Blecks’ presence in London ; now we were equally at a loss to understand their absence. One would have expected Hennie to stop and enjoy her triumph. She had hooked a lion—the lion of the season. One would have thought she would wish to parade him up and down a little before an envious public. But no, she led him straight away into another hemisphere. Everybody boded ill of the marriage, and particularly of this hegira. Elsingford, with his sensibilities, would be sure not to like America. The clash, the hurry, the hard atmosphere, the raw colouring, the ding of the dominant dollar would give on his nerves. And how long would he be able to stand Hennie ? “We’ll have him back some fine morning when we least expect him,” people said. From time to time Harvard or Mrs. Wetherleigh received a letter from him.

These

These became rarer and rarer, and at last stopped altogether. One ceased to hear of him or from him. If he still painted, he contrived to conceal his results from his admirers in England.

It was a comfort, though, to be rid of the Blecks. We breathed freely ; a menace had been removed. Elsingford had been immolated to the public good. It was a high price ; but, after all, the deliverance was worth it.

II

Harvard would have found it difficult to explain how he had come by such a complete impression of the way matters stood, or why he felt so little doubt of its correctness. He hadn't been able to ask many questions. Elsingford hadn't been able to tell him very much ; a man can't complain of his wife. But Harvard had instincts, intuitions. One can reconstruct a mastodon from a tooth and a claw. A word here, a look, a gesture there, and Elsingford's very reticence, had made it all horribly clear.

Elsingford was certainly very ill. It had begun the winter before, at New York, with an attack of what he and Hennie called the "grip"—probably the influenza. This had left him with a cough, which he couldn't succeed in throwing off. In the spring the doctors had insisted that he must stop work and go abroad. Change, rest, recreation would set him up. He wanted to come to England, but Hennie objected. When they had left England on their honeymoon Elsingford had understood that they were to return in the autumn : they had really stopped in New York upwards of four years. Hennie, little by little, had opened her heart to him. With consternation he had discovered in it a violent hatred of his country and his country-people. She hated their very names, she said. England was a sink of iniquity and stodginess.

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stodginess. The English were all that is corrupt, perfidious, ill-mannered, and dull. He tried to reason with her—to argue the question. But Hennie was in some respects a woman. It precipitated quarrels, which ended in her weeping, and his having to beg her pardon. She entertained her American friends with a thousand shrill little anecdotes, comparisons, sarcasms, at England's expense. She was paying off old scores; she had possibly not been ignorant of her unpopularity. Her English husband hovered in the background, conscious that her auditors, through all their delight and laughter, were compassionating him for his loss in not being an American. He always meant to put his foot down; he always meant to go home next spring. But when he broached the subject Hennie would put *her* foot down literally; she would stamp her foot and scold and cry, and he would have to make his peace and comfort her, and talk of something else. Besides, from a pecuniary point of view, he was doing very well. The Americans bought his pictures and paid American prices for them.

When the doctors ordered him abroad, he thought his chance had come. But Hennie wouldn't hear of England. She was very glad "to go to Europe," but she wouldn't hear of England. They had debates and scenes, tears, truces, and a reconciliation, the terms of which were that they should avoid England. They landed at Havre, accordingly, and spent the summer in Germany and Austria, "doing" the Rhine and the Tyrol. They would pass the winter, Hennie decided, in Paris. She had never had a whole winter in Paris; it was of all things what she most desired. She had heard of a very good *pension*, kept by an American lady. Then he could take a studio, and get to work again. And, if he liked, he might run over to London for a visit, for ten days or a fortnight. She couldn't spare him longer than a fortnight; she

was

was too dependent upon him ; she would be too miserable without him.

To the idea of the very good *pension*, kept by an American lady, he opposed the idea of a furnished flat. But Hennie said they would have no "society." He suggested that in the *pension* they might have no solitude. Hennie replied that this was only his selfishness, and they established themselves in the *pension*. But his cough, which had hung on in an obstinate little fashion all summer, began now to go from bad to worse. The cold weather that came early in November seemed to irritate it. Hennie administered hot drinks and applied extra flannels. She discouraged his seeing a doctor. He had seen doctors enough last winter, and what good had they done him? Doctors always made people worse by alarming them. Herbert had too much imagination, anyhow ; he thought too much of his health. If he would pay less attention to it, and take a studio and go to work, he would be as well as anybody. His real trouble was nervous. Indeed, she would go so far as to say that all disease was merely nervousness—a bad state of the mind. "If people wouldn't *think* themselves sick they wouldn't *be* sick." He complained of general lassitude, of pains in his chest, of fever at night. He didn't believe it was anything serious, but it prevented his working, it prevented his enjoying life. He was getting frightfully thin ; he could count his ribs. Then he had a hæmorrhage, and Hennie, in spite of herself, was obliged to call in a doctor to stop the bleeding. The doctor stopped the bleeding, and said that Elsingford ought not to be in Paris ; he ought to go South. He oughtn't to expose himself to the rigours, the changes of a Parisian winter ; he ought to go to the Riviera, to Sicily, to Algiers—it didn't matter where, if he could escape the cold and be in the open air. Hennie scouted this as "nonsense." It confirmed her theory that doctors always exaggerated

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exaggerated things and frightened people. The doctor talked of "indurations" and "pneumonias." Hennie reiterated her conviction that it was all nerves and imagination. As for the hæmorrhage, it came from the throat: Herbert smoked too much. To pull up stakes and go to the Riviera, after they had got so comfortably settled down at Mrs. Slipwell's, would be a dreadful bother, a hideous expense. Well, the doctor concluded, if they remained in Paris, Elsingford must stay in the house; he mustn't go out till spring; that was the only way of ensuring an even temperature. Hennie derided this *régime* as "crazy," and was angry with her husband for following it, as he stubbornly insisted upon doing. "Be a *man*! Get up and go out. Don't stick at home molly-coddling yourself like an old woman." Elsingford was for peace at any price, and two or three times he tried it. He found that his outings aggravated his cough, produced shortness of breath, added a couple of degrees to his evening fever. After that he insisted upon obeying the doctor. Hennie made his conduct the object of endless little ironies. She treated it, and indeed his whole illness, as a personal grievance—a thing perversely fostered to the end of vexing her—a sort of luxury that he permitted himself. "You'll get no sympathy from *me*. What can a man expect who keeps stuck up in the house, enfeebling and enervating his whole system?"

Meanwhile he was losing his constitutional cheerfulness. Little things that formerly would at most have annoyed him, began to exasperate him. Formerly he had had his work, he had had the streets to walk in; now he was a prisoner in Mrs. Slipwell's *pension*, condemned to idleness. He didn't like the *pension*; he didn't like the "society" which had attracted Hennie. There were twenty-five American women and one American man. He had to meet them at table twice a day. Their talk exasperated him, their
strident

strident voices, their queer intonations. After four years of New York he still winced at certain intonations. They talked a good deal about England; they made the most astounding revelations. If he ventured to protest, to doubt, they were too many for him. There was a big, young girl with suspicious-looking yellow hair—a Miss Mackle, from Chicago. She had lived in England, for two years, at the Hôtel Métropole. Her popper had been “promoting a Company” in the City. What she didn’t know about English things and English ways wasn’t worth knowing. She described the domestic manners of the aristocracy, and her audience roared. Hennie backed her up. They couldn’t let England alone; they had an Englishman always with them. Elsingford’s humour, as I have intimated, deserted him at a certain point; and he had sensibilities; and now he was feverish and in pain. Sometimes he would retort—he would abuse America; then there would be trouble. The ladies felt that he had insulted them; he had been “ungentlemanly.” Hennie would cry, and reproach him for offending her friends.

The one American man was a journalist—Paris correspondent for a “syndicate” of American newspapers. Elsingford did not admire the American newspaper press, and this representative of it, he thought, was highly representative. He was a stout, squat, shiny little man, and Elsingford, who was coming to see all things *en noir*, felt that he looked like a toad. He used to tell awful stories of his methods, his achievements, how he ferreted out people’s secrets, beguiled them into giving him their confidence, bribed servants to listen at keyholes, and thus “got a beat” on his rival correspondents. Mr. Hickey might have amused one at a distance, or from time to time. But Elsingford had him in the same house, met him at breakfast and dinner. Hennie liked him immensely, and made all sorts of explanations. Elsingford complained

plained that an explanation wasn't necessarily an excuse. Hickey's idioms were surprising, incredible. He took no interest "into" certain events ; he couldn't do this or that as he "used to could." Elsingford was ill ; he couldn't smile as he used to could.

Sometimes he would revolt. He would declare that he couldn't stand it any longer ; they must move. "Let's take a flat." Hennie would wonder at his selfishness. Wasn't it bad enough to have a *malade imaginaire* for a husband ? to be alone with him in a foreign land ? How could he propose anything so cruel as to take her away from a house where she was comparatively happy ? where she was surrounded by congenial people ? Well, anyhow, then, he said, he wouldn't go to table ; he would have his meals in his room. "*Il ne manquerait plus que ça*," she cried. "Are you trying to kill yourself ? You begin by staying in the house ; you end by staying in your room. It's suicidal. I'm fairly ashamed of you. How a *man* can be so morbid !" Elsingford, from constantly being told so, had ended by believing that he was frightfully selfish. He knew that he was perpetually making his wife cry. He continued to go to table.

Harvard had received a letter from him towards the end of January. He read the letter a second time, to glean the wisps of personal information that were scattered through it. These were few. It was chiefly about his book. All that he had gathered at the end of his second reading amounted to this, that Elsingford was in Paris, in a "*pension de famille*—the queerest place," and that he was ill. *How* ill, in what manner and degree, the writer did not say. Not ill in bed, at any rate, for he spoke of sitting before his fire. "I sat with my heels kicked up on the fender, and read and read till there was no more to read." Harvard would trust that it was nothing serious, nothing constitutional ; and, meanwhile, he must answer the letter.

This

This he did with the warmest feeling, in the warmest language. "My dear, dear fellow! . . . To hear from you after so many years—they must run close upon a hundred—has made glad my heart like wine, has shaken my faith in the vanity of things. There *are* real satisfactions. . . . And what you say of my book—of the pleasure it was fortunate enough to give you—is very sweet to hear. . . . Why do you tell me so little about yourself? I will not believe that your illness is more than trifling; yet I could have wished for an affirmative reassurance. . . . And your work? However, these and all other questions (not least among them that of your return to London, which I hope is a matter of the early future—and you may be sure we shan't let you give us the slip again!), all these questions we shall shortly have an opportunity to settle by the living voice. I shall be in Paris next week on my way to Egypt. My own health is a little troublesome—the throat—a local irritation and a pain that drive me towards the sun. But at my time of life one must expect things. I was a dashing youth of forty something when we parted, now I have turned fifty, and begin to consider myself middle-aged. I shall arrive on Wednesday evening; I shan't let the grass grow under my feet. On Thursday morning we shall be embracing." Elsingford had wound up with a statement that his wife joined him in love. Harvard, softened by a glow of joy and old affection, was able to think charitably even of Hennie. So the words, "Pray convey my best regards to Mrs. Elsingford," did not stick in his pen.

Elsingford had mentioned that his boarding-house was the "queerest place." And from the address at the top of his letter Harvard learned that it was in the Rue François-Premier. He found a small *hôtel particulier*, very new looking, and adorned with many flourishes in stucco. The hall, into which he was admitted

by a man-servant, rather dazzled him ; he had not prepared himself for so much marble and stained glass and wainscoting—for so much ducal splendour. It was scarcely a relief to discern that the wainscoting, though simulating the grandeur of carved oak, was really only *papier maché*. As the man-servant opened the door of the salon Harvard was conscious, for an instant, of a flight of female figures in loose, light-coloured, morning-gowns, escaping in all directions, which bewildered him a little, and led him to bow apologetically. But when he looked up he was alone. The salon smelt of perfumes and upholstery. It was big and stuffy, and very gorgeous. He got a suffocating sense of red plush, of heavy carpets, of gilding and embroidery, of crystal gasaliers, and broken-backed French novels lying open. It was heated by a spiteful little *choubersky*, black, with nickel trimmings.

Harvard was a man who took things seriously—felt things deeply. It was in a serious, even a solemn condition of mind that he awaited his meeting with his friend. He sat on the edge of a red plush sofa, and was conscious of a sort of hush within his soul. A hundred currents of emotion were temporarily halting, ready to rush out at Elsingford's appearance. Presently the door opened, and he found himself grasping Elsingford's two hands and uttering broken ejaculations. Elsingford pressed his hands, and laughed : "Dear old Harvard ! It's awfully good of you to come."

They held each other off at arm's length for a minute, and smiled communications. But Harvard was shocked at what he saw. Elsingford had always been tall and thin ; now he looked attenuated—drawn out. His skin had a bluish tinge ; his eyes seemed too big and brilliant ; there were dark circles under them. He had allowed his beard to grow ; it added ten years to his apparent age. His laughter terminated in a fit of coughing.

Harvard's smile faded to a look of concern. He drew Elsingford
down

down upon the sofa and demanded : " But what is this about your health ? "

Elsingford assured him that it was nothing. " A nasty little cough—a cold that I can't get rid of. I shall be all right in the spring."

Then Hennie came in and shook hands very condescendingly. She had not cast her patronising manner ; she evidently meant to put him at his ease. She developed *her* theory of the case—nerves and imagination. Her exposition had the tone of an arraignment. Her husband was determined to be ill. She blamed him, and pitied herself. " We had a stupid doctor here a month or two ago who put it into Herbert's head that he mustn't go out of doors. Of course it weakens him staying in the house, and makes him morbid. I hope you will be able to get him out to walk with you."

III

In the course of two or three days Harvard had obtained his view of the situation. He had seen a little, heard a little, and divined the rest. It struck him that the situation was deplorable. Elsingford was manifestly unhappy. Harvard believed that he was gravely ill—much more gravely so than he himself seemed to suspect. Elsingford called it a cold ; Hennie treated it as pure perversity and self-indulgence. Harvard feared—he did not like to give his fear a name—but his friend's wasted form, his pallor, the unnatural brightness of his eyes suggested appalling possibilities.

It amazed him to learn that he was not receiving regular medical attendance ; that he had only once seen a doctor. He perceived that Hennie (he must do her justice) was fond of her husband

husband—after her fashion ; fond of him as one is fond of a piece of property. If she could have kept him in a box, to take out when she wanted him, and put back when she was tired, all would have been well. As she couldn't quite do this, she did the next best thing—she bullied him, henpecked him, reproached him, turned on the waterworks, and was only amiable when he effaced himself and let her have her way. If you can't get what you want, nag for it. She was an indefatigable nagger. In a letter to Mrs. Wetherleigh, Harvard summed up his observations thus : " All Hennie asks is to be allowed to call Elsingford's soul her own."

A dinner or two at the *table d'hôte* had shown him a good deal. It would be unendurable to a man in the vigour of health. How Elsingford in his illness lived under it passed Harvard's comprehension. The twenty-five women were as disagreeable as twenty-five vulgar, empty-headed women, with nothing to do, could be. Harvard's humour had even narrower limitations than Elsingford's. They talked, they gossiped, they cackled ; they talked of fashions, and " gentlemen " (they reserved " man " as a term of opprobrium), and the prices of things ; they all talked at once. With their uncultivated voices, their eagerness to be heard, the place sounded like a stock exchange transposed an octave higher. Then there were jealousies and internecine feuds. Some of the ladies " didn't speak ; " and the seat of war was constantly shifting. This couple would make it up to-day, that couple would fall out to-morrow. And they all bragged—every blessed one of the twenty-five bragged of something. Harvard imagined that they spent many hours of each day stretched on sofas in overheated rooms, reading trashy novels and munching sweetmeats, to the detriment of their digestions, their complexions, and their dispositions. They were all nervous and violent ; they all powdered a lot ; they all languished

languished and complained of headaches. There was a tendency to call one another by their Christian names, and "dears" were promiscuous. The whole house reeked of scents.

The presence of Harvard brought their conversation back to England. Most of them had heard of him; some of them had read his books. Mr. Hickey claimed him as a *confrère*, and offered to "show him around" Paris. But a notion prevailed that he was an Anglomaniac—that, an American by birth, he did not love his country. So they began about England; they assailed the "English accent." It was a sheer affectation. Nice English people (they were few) talked just like Amuricans.

"Now, Mr. Harvard, you can't deny it!"

Hennie threw herself into the breach—led the van. She had moved in the very best English society; she named the titled personages with whom she had been intimate. Well, she had never known an English-woman who wasn't—immoral. Oh, some of them concealed it, put on airs of virtue, but they were wolves in sheep's clothing. They were all *pourries au fond*.

Miss Mackle applauded and corroborated. She had lived two years at the Hôtel Métropole; she ought to know. Her popper had been organising a Company in the City; he got an English lord to sit as chairman and to introduce him to people; and "*he paid him money for it!*" "That's your English lord for you!" Then she shook her yellow locks at Elsingford, and cried, "If you were *my* husband I'd have you naturalised."

Harvard, as a man who felt his responsibilities, told himself that he must do something. He couldn't go on to Egypt and leave Elsingford to the tender mercies of Hennie and the twenty-five. Elsingford well, would have been big enough to take care of himself; but Elsingford ill, needed a champion. Harvard saw, however, that he must proceed with circumspection, with tact; he

he mustn't "rile" Hennie. He had already done so once—at their first meeting, when he had learnt that they weren't seeing a doctor.

"But, my dear fellow, I think you ought to see a doctor; I really think you ought to see a doctor."

Elsingford had laughed a little constrainedly. Hennie had given the speaker a look. Afterwards she caught him alone and warned him.

"For mercy's sake, Mr. Harvard, whatever you do don't tell Herbert that he ought to see a doctor. Don't encourage him to think that he's sick. The doctors have already done him harm enough. We had three doctors last winter in America. I assure you I understand the case—I understand my husband. He's a hypochondriac. There's nothing in the world the matter with him except his *idea*. If you want to do him good you'll help me to persuade him to go out—to go about. It's his staying in the house that hurts him."

Harvard felt his responsibilities. He went back to his hotel with knitted brows, wondering what to do. "I'm glad to be able to record that they've left Mamma Bleck in America. But he ought to have a rest from Hennie. She worries and terrifies him. If he opposes her, she scolds; if he resents her scolding, she makes a noise about his temper. She has confided it to me: 'Herbert has a perfectly fiendish temper.' I gave her away; I wish to goodness I could take her back." This from his letter to Mrs. Wetherleigh.

"It's awfully good to see you; you don't know how I've longed for the sound of a Christian tongue. It will be a bore to let you go," Elsingford said.

"My dear fellow, come with me. Come with me to Egypt. The South was recommended to you. We'll lie in the sun beside the Pyramids and talk of art."

"I should

"I should like it immensely ; but my wife wants to stop in Paris."

"We can leave her here. I'll take charge of you ; I'll chaperon you, and hand you back in the spring."

"Oh, I can't leave her alone ; that's impossible."

Harvard argued the matter. "A little independence will do her good. She's happy here. You mustn't fancy yourself indispensable." He painted the pleasures that would await them. Elsingford looked wistful. "I should like it immensely. I'll speak to Hennie," he said. Harvard hammered while the iron was hot ; dilated upon Egyptian starlight, the picturesqueness of the Arabs, the sentiment of the flat, far-reaching landscape. Elsingford was won. "It would be delightful ! A tremendous lark ! I really don't see why I shouldn't do it."

Then Hennie came into the room. "My dear lady," Harvard began, "I have been urging your husband to come with me to Egypt. I hope you will send us off with your benediction—unless you can be moved to come too."

Hennie looked from Harvard to Elsingford, from Elsingford to Harvard.

"What do you think of it, my dear ?" Elsingford inquired.

"Think ? Oh, go, of course. Go, if you wish—of course."

But she gave it an inflection. The light departed from Elsingford's face. "It would be very jolly, but I'm afraid it's scarcely practicable," he said.

The next morning from his haggard mien Harvard knew that she had made him a scene over night. She had taken the will for the deed, and made him a scene. "If I could foment a rebellion, alienate his affections, induce him to elope with me," he thought. He was at his wits' ends. He was eager to defy all danger—to put his fingers between the bark

and the tree and abide the consequences—but he could not see his way.

Hennie harped eternally upon her single string: "Be a *man*! Brace up and go out." It wearied Elsingford. "Some day I'll get to the bottom of my resistance. I'll take you at your word and *do* it, to purchase silence on the subject."

It was a lovely day, soft and sunny, the 15th of February. "I'd be ashamed to pass such a day pent up in the house," had been her refrain since morning. "Go out and take a walk with Mr. Harvard."

"Where's my overcoat? Where are my hat and stick?" he demanded suddenly. "I can't be bothered any longer."

He and Harvard, arm in arm, strolled gently along the quays. The sun was bright, the air was soft, yet it had a treacherous little edge, like the bitter after-taste of something sweet. The effects of colour, of light and shade and atmosphere, were delicious. The Trocadéro melted with the sky in a purple blur; the *bateaux-mouches* puffed busily backwards and forwards, breaking the yellow water into iridescent foam; the leafless trees etched themselves like lace against the luminous blue of the sky. They prolonged their walk as far as the middle of the Pont de la Concorde, whence they gazed up and down the river. The *city*, pink and grey, divided the current like the prow of some grotesque gigantic galley; the towers of Notre Dame loomed darkly over it. Elsingford was in ecstasies. "It's the finest town view in the world," he said. "Hennie was right. My walk has done me good." They hadn't walked more than half a mile. They took a cab home. That night Elsingford seemed immensely exhilarated. He talked a great deal, and very cheerfully. "Tomorrow we'll try it again. It has done me good."

But when Harvard arrived the next day Hennie greeted him
with

with the intelligence that her husband was in bed. "He thinks he has caught a cold. He won't get up."

Harvard found him flushed and drowsy. He roused himself to say, "Hello! old Harvard," and then closed his eyes and appeared to doze.

"Come, come, Herbert; it's time to get up; it's nearly twelve o'clock," said Hennie.

Harvard begged her to step with him into the next room. "My dear lady, we must have a doctor."

She began to deprecate, but he cut her short. "You don't know what you're doing. I'm going for a doctor. I'll bring him back with me."

Harvard gave the doctor such data of the case as he possessed. "If he had fever at night my colleague who advised him to stop in the house was very wise," said the doctor. "I don't like the fever at night. With that, he ought not to have tried to winter in Paris; or, if he was bound to stay here, he ought to have stopped in the house. However, we'll see, we'll see." They found Elsingford breathing hard. He looked at them with dull eyes, and did not speak. Harvard went down to the salon to wait. The doctor joined him there, shaking his head. "Your friend's in a bad way. He ought to have gone South at the beginning of the winter. Your walk yesterday has finished the business; it has fanned a smouldering fire into flame. You'd better go upstairs and look after his wife. I'll come back in an hour."

Hennie was seated at the foot of the bed with hands clasped. She raised a white, agonised face to Harvard as he entered the room.

"If I had dreamed—if I had dreamed that it was anything serious!" she said.

She

She was quite prostrated. Harvard attended to everything, and afterwards accompanied her to Havre and saw her installed in her cabin aboard the steamer. "If I had dreamed—if I had dreamed that it was anything serious!" that was almost all she ever said, except to answer questions.

Harvard hadn't the heart to go on to Egypt. He came back to town and buried himself in his work.

The Love-Germ

By Constance Cotterell

“YES,” said the Professor, thumping on the road with his big stick as he spoke, “I am on its track at last. A few more experiments, and the world will have it in its own hands to free itself from the greatest evil it has ever suffered.”

His nostrils quivered. A little more imagination, and I should have seen flashes from his eyes. I may mention at once that he was not a stage professor, but a nice clean tidy person in real life, the sort of man one could put in a drawing-room without the carpet and curtains swearing at him. He wore clothes that were in fashion, and the only odd thing about him was his rather long hair; but it curled and suited him so well that I sometimes thought that was just vanity. In fact, he was quite the nicest-looking Professor I have ever seen, and shaved himself every morning like the most blatant Philistine.

“Are you so sure,” I ventured desperately, for when he was terribly in earnest he was very convincing, like a loud-voiced preacher, “are you so sure that its only effect is evil?”

He stood still in that narrow lane, and out of the hedge up above the long dog-rose boughs waved their roses at him.

“It is the mightiest instrument of woe that man has ever had to fight,” he said solemnly. “At his strongest and best it smites him

him down. In the flower of his days it permeates his brain, it undermines his imagination, it corrupts his very reason. Its mildest onslaught warps the judgment. When a man begins to think a woman, of whom he probably knows less than of any other, the best of her sex, the way is open for the germ—if it is not already there. And of women it is the greatest enemy. Where would the sufferings of thousands, *millions*, of them have been, if the germ had never burrowed in their brains? Betrayed, the victims of drunken or depraved husbands, helpless widows with hungry families—all this might have been saved to them!"

"But," I objected, trying to stem his rage, "doesn't its influence generally pass and leave the brain as healthy as before?"

He looked at me keenly. He did not wear spectacles, and his eyes were not in the least dim or bleary.

"That is true," he said slowly, "in some cases. After the best years of life have been blighted," he added quickly. "In most cases the brain-power is weakened for life. In women especially."

"Why do you say all this to me, a woman?"

"Because," he answered, "young as you are, I believe you to have a grasp of the seriousness and true import of life which will prevent you, once warned, from falling into this terrible fate."

I tried feebly to stop him, but praise is the hardest thing to fight. Your own heart is against you, and delighteth to hear.

He walked on in silence a little, snuffing up the scent of the dog-roses, and immensely enjoying himself, I could see. He was resting from the untiring quest of germs, down there in the country where we had come to stay too. I looked at him, with his head thrown back and the passion in his face and the fire in his eyes, and I thought treason. I thought what a magnificent lover he would make.

I went back to my old idea. "Are we not just a mass of germs,

germs, some good and some bad? Why mayn't this supposed love-germ be a good one?"

At the word "supposed" he glared at me in such a manner that I dared not doubt the fiend's existence.

"A good germ," he cried, "that makes men forgetful of right and of their duty, untrue to their religion, unfaithful to their wives?"

"It's responsible for the wives in the first place," I said per-versely, "so isn't that rather a righteous judgment?"

He looked annoyed. "Don't quibble," he said. "You call it a good germ that was rampant under Catherine of Russia and Charles II. of England? A good germ that made five miserable women through Henry VIII? A good germ that led Marc Antony and hundreds like him to dishonour? A good germ that ruins Fausts and Gretchens by the thousand? A good germ that wastes young lives like—like Romeo's and Juliet's, that might have been turned to great account? A good germ that sends honourable men and women to death? It's not natural, and therefore it's not right, for one human being to want to die for another! The first and the most common thing a lover offers is to die for his mistress. Is that healthy?"

"But," I objected rather diffidently, for I could not help quailing before his passion and his array of instances, especially the Faust idea, "but isn't it noble to die for another?"

"Are we here to talk about nobility?" he cried. "We are thinking of what is for the good of the whole race."

He was thoroughly modern, this professor, at least as far as I had got. But then, you never know when you have got to the innermost of a man.

"But isn't the world better for the example of a noble unselfish life than for a selfish existence, always seeking merely to develop itself?"

"And

"And what is more selfish than the love-germ?"

"And more unselfish?" I retorted, though I could not but feel puzzled and discomfited and as though he had had the best of it that time. His enthusiasm bore you down. Then I plucked up heart a little. "If it has done more harm it has done more good too than anything else. Christ had it ("I deny it!" he interrupted); people who give their lives to work among the sick and poor have it ("That I altogether deny," he said, "it's a totally different thing"); Mrs. Fry had it; Sister Dora had it; Father Damien had it; Dante too, and we have his poems; all the knights errant who took their lives in their hands ("And who asked them to take their lives in their hands?" he demanded) and righted wrong and broke down oppression——" I stopped for want of breath, and looked defiantly at him.

He smiled kindly upon me.

"That," said he from professional heights, "is not argument. These great and good people never harboured the love-germ. Nor any relation of it. What dominated most of them was a germ not only of another species but another genus. It was the altruism-germ, which is slowly working out our social evolution, the noblest bacillus the human animal can support. Like those beneficent phagocytic bacilli, of which of course you have heard, it will one day have killed all base and baleful germs."

I was silent. His words were very big. His manner was very unanswerable. I was not convinced. Who would be? But his very personality, the very air that blew from him to me, was so convincing that I was quashed for the moment.

"There is a girl down here," I heard him say, as I came out of my baffled vexation; "she has not the germ yet, I believe; I'm not sure. But she is a most likely subject. I intend to watch her. She is ripe. So is a young man who is staying down here

—at

—at her father's very Vicarage. If only my experiments were perfect," he almost groaned, "I could spare them and save them alive, two sane, beautiful, useful people!"

"How do you catch it?" I hastened to ask, he seemed so downstricken.

"How do you 'catch' other germs? We do not eat and drink the flesh and blood of our fellow-creatures, but we keep up a constant interchange of germs with them, nevertheless. And this germ is even less material, more ethereal, so to say, than any other."

"A kind of soul of a germ." I suggested. "A higher order."

"No," he said, "never that."

I wanted to ask if he had ever housed the germ himself, but I did not dare. I afterwards found he hadn't.

"It is an almost spontaneous generation," he went on, his face glowing. "It is the result of certain rapid spasms of certain nerve-centres in the brain. When a man or woman looks at another and begins to love, there is set up an unthinkable violent agitation among these molecules. It is a motion so incalculably rapid that it gives a sense of absolute rest, like a stun, as though the working of the brain had stopped dead short. In reality it is a movement more rapid than the mind can conceive; and it is then that the love-germ is engendered."

"Cannot you operate beforehand on a brain, so that the germ may not 'take'?" I cried, moved to enthusiasm by his earnestness.

"I don't know—I don't know. It is my dream," he answered softly, like one thinking on an absent lover.

The rest of our way lay through the fields. He only woke up once to say, "If only it could be proved that a person had died of it, and one could examine his brain!"

We walked across one grass meadow.

"But it never does kill," he added sorrowfully.

I was gazing on the ripening grasses, thinking of what he had said. Having just learnt that the real seat of sea-sickness was in the base of the brain, I was not surprised to hear that love was there engendered also, contrary to the testimony of all the ages. And I recollect thinking confusedly that in the cases of love and sea-sickness both, you were apt to call for death.

"This is she," he said suddenly, almost in a whisper. "Look ! In the next field."

I lifted my eyes and saw Pleasance Gurney coming towards us. I remember at the very first I thought her a creature by nature set apart as a victim—to speak in terms of love-germ. We met at the kissing-gate. The wicket, the Professor called it. She bowed to him and looked at me, hanging on her foot as though she would like to stop and speak, but he held the gate for her without a word, and so she went on. She had a high instep and her eyes were blue. That was all I had seen clearly. And there was a ripple in her hair.

Next day the Vicarage people called on us, and after that we were always together, picnicking, rowing, walking, bicycling. The Professor had a very healthy taste in picnics, I cannot but own. Indeed, he had a very healthy taste altogether, except his diseased appetite for germs. In the smallest committee there is always an inner circle, and in our party there was always an inner four. It consisted of Pleasance Gurney and me, of the Professor and the young man staying at the Vicarage, Edward Belton. Sometimes we mixed one way, sometimes the other. The Professor developed a great interest in wild flowers, and began to talk about his young days ; which he persisted in shoving a great deal

deal farther off than they really were, on the same principle that he called me "my dear."

Women always hear of men's young days, and like to hear of them.

In our private conversations the Professor became exceedingly elliptical. I found that *it* always stood for the germ, *he* for Edward Belton, and *she* for Pleasance Gurney. When I had once found this out his talk was quite intelligible, and we got on very pleasantly. He had said he would watch Pleasance Gurney, and he watched her very closely. Sometimes I have seen him be half an hour with the party of us and not take his eyes off her. It was a half-wistful, half-penetrating look, and she used to redden under it, but I never could see that she disliked it. I believe he never suffered so much at the thought of the germ seizing on any one as at the thought of Miss Gurney's falling in love with Edward Belton. When we walked home from the Vicarage in the summer twilight he used to talk of it.

"Think of what she might do if she remained sane," he would begin, generally quite suddenly. "Oh, it's piteous, horrible!" His voice would almost break. "Not but what Belton is a fine fellow," he as often as not added, once between his teeth.

I never said anything. I was always wondering if one ought to speak, but I never did.

The Professor came to me one day. After looking uneasily out of window, clearing his throat once or twice, and moving a chair or two,

"Do you know," he said quite nervously, "that that young man, Edward Belton, is—is——"

"Yes?" I said cruelly, sitting and looking at him. I would not help him out.

"Is a victim of the germ?"

He

He forced it out and looked at me for a start of horrified surprise. He almost gave one himself to see that I did not.

"His eyes, his voice, his absence of mind, his agitation," he went on, "—haven't you noticed?"

"I have noticed."

"Though he has seemed more assured the last day or so."

I smiled.

He became still more nervous.

"I—I think we could help him, if it hasn't gone too far. The only thing is," he went on musingly, more like himself, "I have noticed that even if you do remove the object the germ still remains and another object will very often feed it just as well."

"And how do you propose to remove the object?" I asked, with what no doubt corresponded to my great aunt's much admired bridling.

I saw in his eye that he was going to evade me.

"Well, I always thought," he said with an embarrassed hand through his hair, "that when—it—came, you know, it would be a passion for—for—in fact for Miss Gurney."

"Indeed?"

"Just as I expected she would develop one for him."

"O, I never thought that," said I.

His eye brightened.

"But it was so likely she should. Everything was in favour of it."

"Except just one thing."

"What is that?"

"I can't communicate my view," I said with, I hoped, a fine scientific manner. "Well, I conclude it will be of no use to remove Pleasance Gurney. What do you propose to remove?"

"Well,

"Well, I—I—in fact, it is in your presence that it is most active. Indeed, I am afraid he is in a fair way to be what idiots call in love with you."

I cannot describe how nervous he was as he said this.

"I know it," I said, and felt that he thought me a fool for reddening and grinning in a weak sort of way. He has since told me that he did.

He looked at me and gave a kind of gasp.

"And you?" He could hardly speak.

"Oh, I love him," I said. For the life of me I could not help the cruel happiness bursting through into my voice.

He did not say a word, but turned and left me, a bitterly disappointed man. His back had a heartbroken look as it vanished through the door. I know now that half the bitterness of the blow was the thought that the germ had seized on my brain, permeated it, undermined my imagination, corrupted my reason, and all the rest of it, under his very eyes, while he had never so much as dreamt of it. It is true all his thoughts had been taken up with watching for symptoms in Pleasance and Edward Belton. He would as soon have thought of prying for madness in his own mother as for the germ in me.

I believe he spent a wretched day. None of us saw him again for hours.

"She really is a most interesting girl," he said to me that very night in the old friendly way. "If only she——" and so on and so on.

He had had to take me back. I knew the man must speak to somebody—or grow worse. So he took me back again, though his polite and painful congratulations to Edward are better left unspoken of. For several days he went about us with a sad, forsaken air. He had wept over us and would have gathered us
into

into his fold, and we would not. And then when Edward and I happened to meet each other's eyes the look was a lingering look. And when our hands happened to touch they did not hurriedly untouch again. When the Professor marked these things I have seen his face wrung with pain.

Then I went away for a few days.

When I came back I noticed a certain absorbed look and suppressed excitement about my Professor. He seemed to want to speak to me, but not to be able to force himself to the point. At last he succeeded. I had just come in from a walk and we were sitting in the garden.

"I am certain the germ is attacking her brain," he began in a low voice. "I am certain of it. After all these years I cannot mistake the signs."

"I suppose not," I said dryly. "Oh, no, you cannot possibly be mistaken."

"I cannot," he said uneasily.

"So I said." I fanned myself with my hat.

"She is falling in—love," he said with a gulp. "I don't know with whom. Indeed, failing Edward Belton, who is there for her to fall in—love with?" He gulped again.

I am afraid I stared at him. "Oh, I don't know if you don't," I blundered out.

"I?" said the Professor.

I said nothing.

"It would be interesting," he went on, with a spark of the old enthusiasm I had not missed till I heard it again, "very interesting if the germ developed without any object, if a person were found just in—love without any one special calling it out. At times I find her eyes looking at me like those of an animal in pain, and seeking help from the misery it does not understand. Curious, if
it

it were instinct turning to the only man in the world who knows what is the matter with her! A man, alas! who would do anything to help her, but who has not yet found the cure."

He ceased, and remained gazing at the ground, a mere mass of dejection.

"You take a great interest in her," I said stupidly.

His eyes flashed. "And who would not?" he cried. "A young beautiful creature like that, a creature who could make existence so good and glad for hundreds of people. There is nothing she could not do if she remained sane. She is extremely clever. She has taken a great interest in bacteriology, and seems really to grasp the enormous part it plays in life. Who could bear to see it all lost, all frustrated, by a disease of the brain?"

"Of course her being beautiful can't matter," I said cruelly; "but, if she is so intelligent and so interested in germs, why not explain your theory to her and help her to avoid her danger?"

He looked at me thoughtfully. "It is an idea," he said.

"Have you ever spoken of your own particular germ to her?"

"N—no, I haven't," he admitted.

"Why not?" I persisted. I felt I had him at some sort of mean advantage.

"I don't know," he said rather weakly. "I really couldn't say."

"Well," I said suggestively, "I passed her a minute ago, sitting on the seat under the willows by the river, drawing in the sand."

I looked at my shoes attentively for the space of a minute. When I looked up again the other chair was empty.

By-and-by he came back. He looked frightened and anxious and miserable.

"Well?"

At first he affected not to know what I meant, and made as though he would pass me on his way in. Then :

"I have spoken of it to her," he said, and I thought, and still think, hurried into the house.

I put my hat on, and went out of the garden. I went down to that seat under the willows by the river. It was empty. Large and clear in the sand in front were his initials. Somebody had hurriedly tried to scratch them over, but there they were.

Then Pleasance Gurney visited a great deal among her father's poor people in the village. It took her all day long. It was the turn of the visitings to prevent the picnics. But we all went on picnicking just the same, except that the Professor had a great deal of work to do, and could very seldom come. One day I went into his room. A week's dust lay over all his papers. Theories, naturally, one works out in one's head. The others began to remark on his abject face, and to speak to me of it. I, of course, had not noticed it.

He hardly ever spoke to me. Sometimes we sat silent for half an hour. I think he liked that, and felt better for it. He used to begin with his chin on his chest, and his eyes on the ground, Then by little and little his head got higher and higher, till, by the end of the sitting, he was generally looking out straight in front of him, with a far away look in his eyes, and sometimes a dawning smile on his mouth. But as soon as anybody came, or I opened my lips to speak, he would shake his shoulders and pull himself together, and the smile hardened into sternness, and then sank into gloom again.

I do not believe he saw Pleasance all that week. Once she stood under the morning room window, and called up to me that she had stolen some cherries from our trees, for a sick child. As she turned away I looked behind me, and there stood the Professor, craning

craning his neck to look out of the window, with a fine glow on his face. He sat down and drummed with his fingers on the table, though it was open to anybody to go and carry her cherries for her.

"I think it was the morning after that that we found ourselves talking almost as we used to talk.

"This has been a terrible holiday for me," he was saying as simply as a child.

"Yes," I murmured.

"Because of her danger." His face was turned away.

"Yes." I found I was eagerly leaning forward.

He looked more comfortable when I leaned back again.

"It is so horrible." He drew a great breath. "No one can understand how horrible it is to me."

"I think I can understand."

"You?"

He looked at me with such piercing reproach that the bare idea of my loving Edward Belton seemed for the moment black apostacy.

I dropped my head before him.

"I did not mean to hurt you, child," he said, looking at me as though he did not see me, "but I believe that there is no human being who can understand."

He clasped his hands and gazed out of the window. His head lay against the back of his chair. Gradually, as I had seen it before, the pain died out of his face. His mouth and eyes grew soft, and his hands relaxed. I think he forgot where he was. I think he was not in the body at all.

"And I would give my life to save her," he said to himself very low.

As he heard himself say those words a sudden shock went through him. He sat like a stone.

And in the silence I heard the echo of his words ringing from a few weeks back: *The first and most common thing a lover offers to his mistress—*

"Do you know what has happened?" he said at last, in a strange stifled voice, and I saw that his hands were clenched.

"What?" I asked joyfully, and exulted, till I saw the anguish in his face.

"I too am a victim."

I caught his clenched hands, I could not help it, and wrung them hard.

"I am so glad," I cried. "Dear Pleasance! Now she will be happy."

A little light trembled over his face and was gone in an instant, buried in deepest gloom. He rose up.

"I have a battle to fight," he said, in such a sad, solemn, earnest way that I held on harder to his hands, and looked pityingly up at him.

But he broke from me and went into his own room. No one saw him again till the evening.

I went out for a long walk.

Once or twice I lingered by his room on tiptoe. I could think of nothing else but the fight going on within. Which would win, those deep hopes and convictions, or the great law of nature, the heritage from his fathers? But in the light of the events of my own life just then, his theories showed so impious, that even I did not sympathise to the full with his life struggle.

In the evening his door was open. The room was empty. Nothing had been touched. All the old dust lay on everything. Only, his chair was drawn up to the empty grate, back to the window. I could see him as he had sat all day with his head bent,

bent, gazing, gazing at that hard, unanswering black-lead, while the fight raged up and down within him.

Then I went out thoughtfully and walked to and fro in the shrubbery. Were two people happy, or were two more people miserable in this world?

Suddenly I heard a voice quite near.

"My heart's love," it was saying, in tones and depths I had never dreamt it had. And then it poured out all the dear silly things that he had certainly never said before, nor heard, but must have known by divine instinct.

I caught one glimpse through the leaves as they passed. His face looked wan and worn from his tremendous battle, but happy—I have never seen the face of a man look so happy.

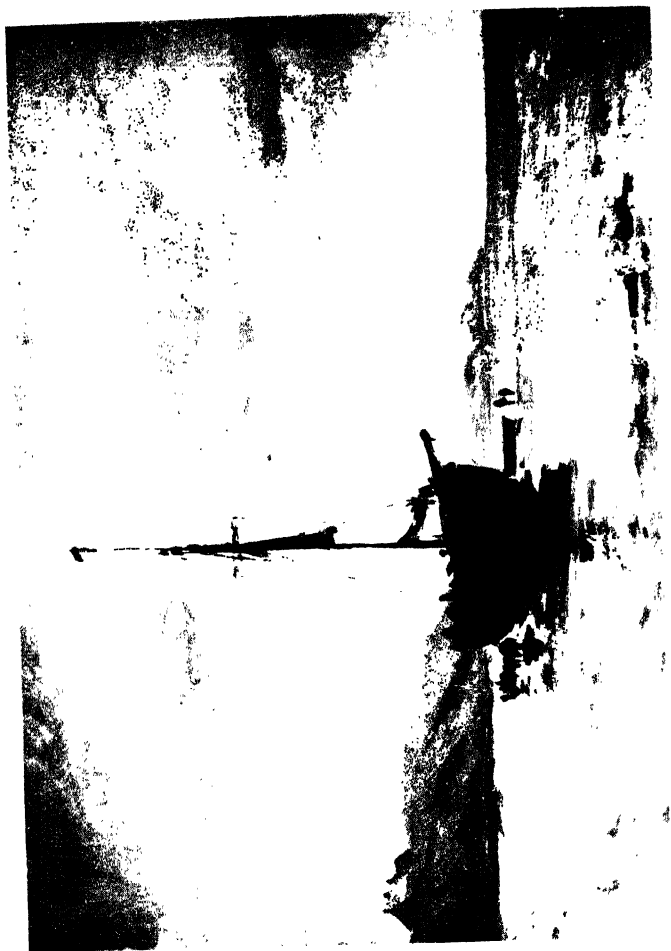
I crept away.

He was great in his defeat. He was, as I had known, a magnificent lover. I think even Pleasance does not understand her—*my* Professor—as I understand him.

His book on the love-germ is not yet out. But he has just published one on a very fine mixed breed of germs the Americans have lately perfected in their big cities.

St. Columb's Porth, Cornwall

By Gertrude Prideaux-Brune



Stories Toto Told Me

By Baron Corvo

V.—About the Heresy of Fra Serafico

ONE of Toto's brothers was called Nicola, and he was going to be a priest. He was nineteen years old, and very like Toto in appearance with this notable difference—there was no light in his eyes. He was a curious, gaunt, awkward, unworldly creature, absolutely the opposite of Toto, who had the charm and freedom of a young savage on the loose. I don't know why the clergy, for whom I entertain the highest respect, of course, should always slink along by the wall, expressing by the cringing obsequiousness of their carriage that they would take it as a favour for some one to kick them, but such is the case. I used to see this Nicola sneaking about during his summer vacation, but I don't think I ever spoke to him except when he came to say "How do you do?" and "Good-bye." One morning, soon after his arrival, I asked Toto what was the matter with his brother, for he looked even more caged, humpty-backed, and slouching, more utterly miserable and crushed than usual. "'Cola, sir," he said, "you must know, has a very feeling heart, and if he meets with any little misfortune it is a much more serious thing to him than it would be to me. I, of course, would say that it didn't matter,
and

and look for something else to amuse me ; but 'Cola will think over his grief so much that it will seem far greater than it really is, and he will not be able to eat his food or take any interest in anything, and wish he was dead or that he had never given himself the annoyance of being born. And I suppose now he has had some little trouble in his college—dropped his garter, perhaps, and let his stocking down when out with the camerata in the street, and he has thought about it so much that now he believes he has committed a sin against the sixth commandment, by an indecent exposure of his person. But, if I have your leave, I will ask him, for I can see him saying his beads behind the Emissario."

Toto ran away, and I took a little nap.

When I woke, he was coming down the steps, holding a rhubarb leaf over his head. "I am sure you will be much amused, sir, when I tell you what is the matter with 'Cola," he said. "I have made him very angry with me because I could not help laughing at him, and he has said that I should certainly burn for making a mock of the clergy—clergy, indeed, and he only a sub-deacon, and I his brother who know all about him and everything he ever did ! And Geltruda, too ! For my part, I am sure it is a gift straight from Heaven to be a priest, because I remember that 'Cola used to be quite as fond of enjoying himself as I am, but since he went to the Seminario he will not look at a petticoat—that is to say, the face that belongs to it, for it is only the petticoats he does look at. Have I not seen my little mother cry when he came home, because he only put his lips to her hand—and they didn't touch it—as if she were la Signora Duchessa instead of the mother who wished to take him in her arms ? But his dolour now, sir, is this. You must know that in the Seminario you have to preach to the other chierichetti in the refectory,

refectory, during supper. This is to give you practice in delivering sermons. And after you have preached, you go to your place, and, if it is necessary to make any remarks upon what you have said, the professors tell you then what they think. Well, it was 'Cola's turn to preach the night before he came home, and he says that it was a sermon which he had taken all his life to write. He had learnt it by heart, and on arriving in the pulpit he repeated it, moving his hands and his body in a manner which he had practised before his mirror, without making a single mistake. When he had finished, the Rector paid him compliments, and two or three of the other professors did the same. But when it came to the turn of the Decanus who is the senior student, he said that the college ought to be very proud of having produced an abbatino so clever as to be able, in his first sermon, to invent and proclaim sixteen new and hitherto unheard of heresies. And 'Cola, instead of feeling a fine rage against this nasty, jealous prig, with his mocking tongue, takes all the blame to himself and is making himself wretched. I told him that there was no difficulty about heresies, if that was what he wanted, because I think that to do wrong is as easy as eating, and that the real difficulty is to keep straight. But he says he is a miserable sinner, and that it is all his fault, for he cannot have perfectly corresponded with his vocation. Why, as for heresy, sir, I will tell you how a friar in Rome was accused of preaching heresy, and then you will know that it is not always the being accused of inventing heresies that makes you guilty of that same.

“Ah well, formerly there lived in Rome a certain friar called Fra Serafico. When he had lived in the world he was of the Princes of Monte Corvino, but at about the age of 'Cola he astonished everybody by giving up his rank and his riches and his state, and becoming a son of Saint Francis. Now the Franciscans of his
convent

convent were not quite able to understand why a young man who had his advantages, should give them up as he did, and prefer a shaved head and naked feet and to be a beggar. And Fra Serafico though he had the best will in the world, didn't make a good impression on the other friars, because his manners were different to theirs. He felt miserable without a pocket-handkerchief for his nose. And it was some time before the superiors became certain that he had a true vocation, for he went about his duties with diligence and humility, feeling so shy, because the things around him were so strange, that he gained for himself amongst the other novices the nickname of 'Dumbtongue.'

"And this went on until he had finished his probation, and taken the habit and the vows.

"One day after this, the Father Guardian, in order to give him a good humiliation, told him to prepare a sermon to preach before the convent at the chapter that afternoon. Fra Serafico received this command in silence, and, having kissed the ground before his Superior, he went away to his cell, and when the afternoon came he stood up to preach.

"Then, sir, a very curious thing happened, for Fra Serafico preached, and while he preached the faces of the other friars became set in a glare of astonishment, and the eyes of the Father Guardian were almost starting out of his head by the time the sermon was finished. Then there was silence for a little while, and the friars looked at one another and nodded. It seems that they had been entertaining an angel unawares, for this Dumbtongue, as they called him, had turned out to be a perfect Goldenmouth. And the friars were more than glad, for, though they were all good men and very holy, they had no great preacher among them at that time; and they thought it was a shame that an Order whose business was to preach should have no man who could
preach

preach well, and at last they saw a way out of the difficulty: 'For surely,' they said, 'this Serafico speaks the words of San Paolo himself, with the tongue of an angel.'

"After this he gave fervorini daily in the convent church, till all the city was filled with his fame, and at last he was named by Papa Silvio to preach the Lent in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso.

"Of course you know very well, sir, that the devil is always disgusted to see the works of God going on as easily as water running out of a turned-on tap, and you know also that when a good work seems to be thriving at its best, then is the time the devil chooses to try to upset it. And so he went to a little Jesuit called Padre Tonto Pappagallo—and, of course, I need not tell you that the Jesuits are not what you might call friendly to the Franciscans—and he suggested to him the evil thought, that it was a bad thing for the Jesuits to be beaten in preaching by the Franciscans, and what a score it would be if a Jesuit were to have the honour of catching Fra Serafico in the act of preaching heresy. Padre Tonto, it happened, had made a bad meditation that morning, having allowed his eyes to fix themselves upon some of the stone angels who were dangling their beautiful white legs over the arches round the apsis, and his thoughts to wander from his meditation to those things which every good priest flies from with as much haste as he would fly from the foul fiend appearing in person. And so his mind was just like a fertile field, and when the devil popped in his suggestion, the seed immediately took root, and before the morning was over it had burst into blossom, for this Padre Tonto cut off to the Church of San Carlo to hear the great preacher, and when he saw the vast multitude all so intent upon those golden words, that if an earthquake had happened then and there I believe no one would have blinked, and when he heard the sighs from the
breasts

breasts of wicked men and saw the tears rain down on women's cheeks, he envied Fra Serafico his power to move men so, and he began to listen to the sermon that he might catch the preacher preaching heresy. Now, of course, while he was staring about, he had not paid attention to the words of gold, and the first sentence that caught his ear when he did begin, indeed, to listen was this, 'No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.'

"Padre Tonto jumped up and ran out of the church. He was delighted, for he had heard a heresy straight away. 'No one shall be crowned,' he said—that is, of course, with the crown of glory which the saints in heaven wear for ever—unless he has contended lawfully—that is to say, as the martyrs did in the Colosseo. Pr-r-r-r-r, my dear Serafico! And what, then, becomes of all the holy bishops and confessors, and of the virgins and penitents and widows whom Holy Church has numbered with the saints? These were not martyrs, nor did they fight with beasts, like San Paolo' (and I cannot tell you the place, sir). 'An I were Pope, Seraficone mio, I should burn your body in the Campo di Fiore to-morrow morning, and your soul in hell for ever and the day after.' And saying these words and all sorts of other things like them, he ran away to the Sant' Uffizio and made a mischief with much diligence.

"Now Padre Tonto had a very good reputation and was exceedingly well thought of in Rome. Moreover, the accusation he made, appeared to be well founded. So Fra Serafico was sent for and the question was put to him, 'Did you, or did you not, in your sermon preached in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso on the second Monday in Lent, say, "No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully?"' And Fra Serafico replied that his questioner, who was the Grand Inquisitor himself, spoke like
a book

a book with large letters and clasps of silver, for without a doubt he had used those very words. The Grand Inquisitor laid down the key of the question room, and remarked that confession of wrong done was always good for the soul : and he pointed out to Fra Serafico the dreadful heresy of which he had been guilty in uttering words which, if they meant anything at all, meant this, according to Padre Tonto Pappagallo, who was a theologian, *That it was impossible to get to heaven unless you suffered martyrdom.* And he told Fra Serafico, that as he had made his heresy public by preaching it to all Rome, it would be necessary to make amends also in the place of his crime, or else to let himself be burnt with fire in the Campo di Fiore on the next public holiday, both to atone for the sin, and in order to encourage other people who might feel it their business to preach heresy as he had done. And Fra Serafico answered that he wished to live and die a good and obedient son of Holy Mother Church, and to submit his judgment in all things to Hers ; therefore, it would give him much joy to make public amends for his heresy at any time or place which His Eminence in his wisdom might be pleased to appoint.

“ The next day the people of Rome were called by proclamation to the Church of San Carlo Al Corso to see Fra Serafico’s humiliation, and because he was such a celebrated man there came together all the noblest and most distinguished persons in the city. Papa Silvio sat upon the throne with the Princes Colonna and Orsini on his right hand and on his left. All around there were fifty scarlet cardinals, bishops by the score in purple and green, friars grey, friars white, friars black, monks by the hundred, and princes and common people like rain drops. And when they had all taken their places, Fra Serafico entered between two officers of the Sant’ Uffizio with their faces covered in the usual manner, and first he prostrated himself before the Majesty in the tabernacle,
and

and then at the feet of Papa Silvio, then he bowed from the waist to the Sacred College and the prelates, and from the shoulders to the rest ; and then he was led into the pulpit from which he had proclaimed his heresy. There he began to speak, using these words : ‘ Most Holy Father, Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords, my Reverend Brethren, Most Illustrious Princes, my dear Children in Jesus Christ. I am brought here to-day on account of the vile and deadly heresy which I am accused of preaching in this pulpit on the first Monday in Lent. That heresy is contained in the following words : “ No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.” I freely confess, acknowledge, and say that I did in real truth use those words. But before I proceed to abjure the heresy contained in them and to express with tears my penitence for the crime I have committed, I crave, my beloved children in Jesus Christ, most illustrious princes, my reverend brethren, most eminent and most reverend lords, and, prostrate at Your Feet, Most Holy Father, your indulgence for a few moments while I relate a dream and a vision which came to me during the night just past, which I spent for the good of my soul upon the tender bosom of the Sant’ Uffizio.’ Fra Serafico’s face as he spoke beamed with a beauty so unearthly, his manner was so gracious, and the music of his golden voice so entrancing that Papa Silvio, making the Sign of the Cross, granted him the favour he had asked.

“ The Friar went on : ‘ In my dream it appeared to me that I was standing before the bar of the Eternal Judge, and that there I was accused by a certain Jesuit named Padre Tonto Pappagallo of having preached heresy on the first Monday in Lent, in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso, using these words : “ No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.” And while I waited there, Blessed Father Francesco himself came and stood beside me. And the Judge of all men looked upon me with
wrath

wrath and anger, asking whether I confessed my crime, and I, wretched man that I am, in the presence of Him who knows all things, even the inmost secrets of the heart, could do nothing else but acknowledge that it was even so. Then the Padre Eterno, who, though terrible beyond all one can conceive to evil-doers, is of a justice so clear, so fine, and straight that the crystal of earth becomes as dark as mud, the keenness of a diamond as blunt granite, and the shortest distance between two points as crooked as the curves in a serpent's tail—this Just Judge, I say, asked me, who am but a worm of the earth, whether I had anything to say in excuse for my crime.

“And I, covered with confusion as with a garment, because of my many sins, replied, “May it please Your Majesty, I have confessed my crime, and in excuse I can only say that when I was preparing my sermon I took those words from the writings of San Gregorio.”

“The Judge of all men ordered my angel to write this down, and deigned to ask whether I could say in what part of the writings of San Gregorio this heresy could be found. “May it please Your Majesty,” I replied, “the heresy will be found in the 37th Homily of San Gregorio on the 14th chapter of the Gospel of San Luca.” Then I covered my face with my hands and waited for my dreadful sentence; but Blessed Father Francesco comforted me, and patted my shoulder with his hand, all shining with the Sacred Stigmata, and the Padre Eterno, speaking in a mild voice to the Court of Heaven, said, “My children, this little brother has been accused of preaching a heresy, and this heresy is said to have been taken from the writings of San Gregorio. In this case, you will perceive that it is not our little brother who is a heretic, but San Gregorio, who will therefore have the goodness to place himself at the bar, for We are determined to search this matter to its remotest end.” Then San Gregorio was led by his guardian angel from

from his throne among the Doctors of the Church, and came down to the bar and stood beside me and Blessed Father Francesco, who whispered in my ear, "Cheer up, little brother, and hope for the best!"

"And the Padre Eterno said, "San Gregorio, this little brother has been accused before Us, that on the first Monday in Lent, in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso, he preached heresy in the following words: 'No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.' We have examined him, and he alleges that he has taken these words from the 37th Homily, which you have written upon the 14th chapter of the Gospel of San Luca. We demand, therefore, that you should say, first, whether you acknowledge that you have written these words; and secondly, if you have done so, what excuse you have to offer?" And San Gregorio opened the book of his writings which, of course, he always carries with him, and turned the pages with an anxious finger. Presently he looked up with a smile into the Face of God and said, "May it please Your Majesty, our little brother has spoken the truth, for I have found the passage, and when I have read it, You will find the answer to both questions which Your Condescension has put me." So San Gregorio read from his writings these words, "But we cannot arrive at the great reward unless through great labours: wherefore, that most excellent preacher, San Paolo, says, 'No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.' The greatness of rewards, therefore, may delight the mind, but does not take away the obligation of first fighting for it." "Hm-m-m-m," said the Padre Eterno, "this begins to grow interesting; for it seems, My children, that Our little brother here has quoted his heresy from San Gregorio, and that San Gregorio in his turn quoted it from San Paolo, upon whom, therefore, the responsibility seems to rest. Call San Paolo."

"So

“So the seven archangels blew their trumpets and summoned San Paolo, who was attending a meeting of the Apostolic College, and when he came into Court his guardian angel led him to the bar, where he took his place by the side of San Gregorio’ (the one who made them Catholics in England, sir, and the chant, sir, and saw San Michelé Arcangiolo on top of the Mola, sir), ‘and of my wretched self. “Now, San Paolo,” said the Padre Eterno, “We have here a little grey friar who has been accused of preaching heresy on the first Monday in Lent, in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso, in these words, ‘No one shall be crowned unless he has contended lawfully.’ And he has informed Us that he quoted these words from the 37th Homily of San Gregorio on the 14th chapter of the Gospel of San Luca. We have examined San Gregorio, and he has pointed out to Us that he did indeed use these words, as our little brother has said ; but San Gregorio also alleges that they are not his own words, but yours. The Court, therefore, would like to know whether San Gregorio’s statement is true.” Then San Paolo’s guardian angel handed to him the book which contained all the letters he had written, and after he had refreshed his memory with this, the great apostle replied, “May it please Your Majesty, there is no doubt that both our little brother and San Gregorio are right, for I find in my second letter to San Timoteo, chapter ii. verse 5, the following words : ‘And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he contend lawfully.’” “Well !” said the Padre Eterno, “this is a very shocking state of things that you, of all men, should publish heresies in this manner and lead men of all ages into error ! San Gregorio, taking the statement on your authority, preaches heresy in his time, and a thousand years after, our little brother, innocently thinking that men of such eminence as the Apostle of the Gentiles and the Apostle of England are of good authority,

authority, preaches the same heresy. You see now that it is impossible to know what the end of a lie will be when once it has been started on its course."

"“But hear me,” said San Paolo, who was a very bold man, “for I venture to submit to Your Majesty that the second letter which I wrote to San Timoteo has been placed by Your Church on earth on the list of the Canonical Books, and this means that when I wrote that letter I was inspired by the Third Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity, and that therefore I was divinely protected from teaching error in any shape or form!”

““Of course it does,” replied the Padre Eterno. “The words that you have written, San Paolo, in your second letter to San Timoteo, are not the words of a man, but the words of God Himself, and the matter amounts to this, that our little brother here, who took the words from San Gregorio, who took them from you who were divinely inspired to write them, has not been guilty of heresy at all, unless God Himself can err. And who,” continued the Padre Eterno, with indignation, “We should like to know, is the ruffian who has taken up Our time with this ridiculous and baseless charge against Our little brother?”

““Somebody said that it was a Jesuit named Padre Tonto Pappallo, at which the Padre Eterno sniffed saying, “A Jesuit! and what in the name of goodness is that?”

““So the Madonna whispered that it was a son of Sant’ Ignazio. “Where is Sant’ Ignazio?” said the Padre Eterno. Now Sant’ Ignazio, who had seen the way things were going, and what a contemptible spectacle his son was presenting, had hidden himself behind a bush and was pretending to say his office. But he was soon found and brought into Court, and the Padre Eterno asked him what he meant by allowing his spiritual children to act in this way. And Sant Ignazio only groaned and said, “May it please Your

Your Majesty, all my life long I tried to teach them to mind their own business, but in fact I have altogether failed to make them listen to me."

"That was my dream, Most Holy Father, Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords, my Reverend Brethren, Most Illustrious Princes, my Beloved Children in Jesus Christ; and since you have been so gracious as to listen, I will now no longer delay my recantation of the heresy of which I am accused of preaching on the first Monday in Lent, in the Church of San Carlo Al Corso."

"But Papa Silvio arose from His throne, and the cardinals, and the bishops, and the princes, and the people, and they all cried in a loud voice, 'Eviva, eviva, Bocca d'Oro, eviva, eviva.'"

VI.—About One Way in which Christians Love One Another

"Yes," I said, "that's a very good story, Toto. And now I want to know where you learnt it."

"Well, sir," he replied, "it was told to me by Fra Leone of the Capuccini. Not that I wish you to think the Capuccini and Franciscans to be the same. Not at all. But, of course, you know better than that, and it is like their impertinence of bronze to pretend that they are, as they do, for the Capuccini were not even heard of for hundreds of years after San Francesco founded his Order of Little Brothers. And the reason why they came to be made was only because of the vain man Simon Something or other, who gave more thought to his clothes than was good for his soul, and found that the sleeves which were good enough for San Francesco, and the round tippet which that heavenly saint wore, did

did not suit his style of beauty, and so he made himself a brown habit instead of a grey one, with plain sleeves to show the shape of his arms, and no pockets in them, and a tippet not round but pointed like the piece of flesh there is between my shoulders. And then, because there are always plenty of men ready to run after something new, he got together so many followers who wished to dress themselves like him, that the Holy Father preferred to give them permission to have their own way rather than cause them to become rebels against our Holy Mother the Church, by making it difficult for them to be obedient, because the matter had really no importance to speak of."

I said that I knew all about that, but that I didn't believe that religious men, whether they were Franciscans or sham ones like the Capuccini, or even Jesuits, would show such jealousy and envy of each other as appeared in the story of Fra Serafico.

"And there," said Toto, "I can assure you that you are altogether wrong. I may tell you that in every religious order there are two kinds of men—the saints and the sinners; and of course, the saints always love each other as Francesco and Domenico did; and, by contrary, having submitted themselves to the infernal dragon who always drives all love out of the hearts of his slaves and inflames them with the undying fire of envy, the sinners hate each other with a hatred like the poison of vipers, and occupy themselves with all kinds of schemes by which they may bring discredit upon their enemies, the sinners of other orders. Why, I will tell you a tale which is quite true, because I have seen it, of how some Capuccini—and you will not ask me to say where their convent is—have done a deed by which much shame will some day be brought upon a house of Jesuits who live in their neighbourhood.

"Well, then, there was a convent of Capuccini, and outside the grounds

grounds of the convent there was a small house in which I lived with my father and my mother and my brothers and sisters, and it was a very lonely place. And about as far off as it would take you to say five Paters, and five Aves, and five Glorias, there was another house, and there were perhaps three or four cottages in sight, and that is all, so it was a very lonely place. But six miles away there was a large college of Jesuits, up in the hills, and when a Jesuit died it was the custom to bury him in the churchyard of the Capuccini.

“Now there was a man who came to live in the other house, and he was not an old man nor a young man, but just between the two; and because he felt lonely he used to pay attentions to all the ladies who came in his way when visiting this celebrated convent of Capuccini; and our difficulty was to know which one he was going to marry. And there was one in particular who appeared to these Capuccini to be the one that he ought to marry, but her home was far away in a large town, and so one of the friars wrote to her parish priest to ask what ought to be done, and the parish priest replied: ‘Yes, you must get her married as soon as possible;’ and soon after that the respectable man married her and brought her to the house in the lonely place that I am telling you about. And they lived there very quietly for a little while, and then his business called the respectable man away from his house for a few weeks. So he went and his wife remained at home, and there was no one in the house besides her but a woman, her servant.

“And presently, in the middle of one night, there was a knocking at the door of the small house where I lived with my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, and I heard this knocking because that night I was going to enjoy myself in the orchard of the Capuccini. So I came downstairs in my shirt only ;

only ; and because I wished to keep what I was going to do a secret, I left my shirt rolled up in a bundle under the seat in the porch, and I will tell you why : I thought of two things ; the first thing was that it was a very rainy night, and if my mother found in the morning that my shirt was wet, she would guess I had been up to mischief, and having told my father, I should have nothing but stick for breakfast ; and the second thing was that if some Capuccino should be persuaded by an uneasy devil to look out of his window to see a naked boy running about in the orchard or in the churchyard, he would say to himself that it was just a poor soul escaping from purgatory, and then having repeated a *De Profundis*, he would go back to his bed. So just as I was creeping across the yard with the warm rain pouring in torrents over my body, there came this banging on the door of my house, and I skipped behind a tree and waited. Then my father opened the window of his room upstairs, demanding what was the matter, and the voice of the servant of the respectable man, replied that la Signora Pucci had suddenly been taken very ill, and that if my mother was a Christian woman she would come to her assistance. This servant spoke with a very thick voice, and as I did not think I was going to be amused if I stayed behind my tree, I ran away and enjoyed myself enough with the peaches belonging to these Capuccini. When I came home I dried myself with a cloth, took my shirt from under the seat in the porch, and went to bed again. And in the morning when I awoke there was no one to give us our breakfast, for my father was gone to his work and my mother to the assistance of the wife of the respectable man, so I was thankful enough that I had made so many good meals during the night. All that day and all the next night and the day after was my mother away from her home, and I need not tell you that I began to think that something very strange was happening
of

of which I ought to know ; so I waited here and I waited there, and I put a question of one kind to this and a question of another kind to that, and during the night, after my father had seen me go to bed, I got up again, left my shirt in the porch as before, not because it was raining now, but because I liked it, as well as for the other reason, and I wandered about quite naked and happy and free," (here he tossed his arms and wriggled all over in an indescribable manner) "dodging behind trees and bushes, from my father's house to the house of the respectable man and to the churchyard of the convent of the Capuccini, and during that night I saw many curious things, and these, with the answers which were given to the questions I had been asking, and other odds and ends which I either knew or had seen with my eyes, made me able to know exactly what this mystery was.

"Now I ought to have told you this, that a week before, a very old priest from the Jesuit college of which I have already spoken had been buried in the convent churchyard, also he was the confessor of the wife of the respectable man, and a priest whom she held in the very greatest honour, and he was called Padre Tommaso. He was a saint indeed whom everybody venerated, for the Signor Iddio had made him live one hundred and two years in order that he might add to the many good deeds which in his long life he had done. I should like you to remember this, because now I must go to another part of the story.

"After the servant of the respectable man had told my father that her mistress was ill, my mother arose from her bed and went at once to the house of the sick person. Arrived there, she found la Signora Pucci fallen upon the floor in great pain, and, being a woman herself, she knew with one stroke of her eye what was the matter.

"Now the servant of the respectable man, who had accompanied
my

my mother, was drunk and so useless. Therefore my mother, who is the best of all women living, made la Signora Pucci as comfortable as she could at that time, went into the stable, put the horse into the cart and, having driven for three miles to the nearest town, brought a doctor back with her as the day was breaking.

"The sick woman was put to bed, and the doctor gave my mother directions as to what was to be done during his absence; for he said he must go home now to finish his night's rest, and in the morning he had his patients to see, but in the afternoon he would come again, and that then, perhaps, something would happen. But my mother told him that she would on no account consent to be left alone in the house with la Signora Pucci, because she perceived that something most dreadful was to happen. The doctor replied that he would not stay, because he could not; and that if my mother was not there to assist the sick woman in her trouble, she might die. But my mother would by no means be persuaded, and in the end she conquered, and the doctor stayed, and they waited all through the night, and the next morning at noon there came a new baby into that house, and la Signora Pucci was so astonished that she really nearly died, and as for the baby, he did die after a half-hour of this world.

"Then the sick woman became mad, and cried in delirium that she would not have it known to the respectable man, her husband, that a new baby had come into that house, so my mother went to the Father Guardian of these Capuccini, telling him all that she knew, how she had baptized the baby Angelo herself seeing that he was at the point of death, and that therefore he must be buried in the churchyard, and how his mother, la Signora Pucci, demanded that this should be done secretly, and that the grave should be made with Padre Tommaso, of whom I have told you before, who

was

was a saint that any person might be glad to be buried with. Upon which the Father Guardian replied that this was as easy as eating; and he directed my mother, having put the dead baby Angelo into a box, to take him under her cloak at midnight to the grave of Padre Tommaso. So she did as she was told, putting the dead baby Angelo into a wooden box in which rice had been, and cutting a cross upon the lid so that San Michelé Arcangiolo should know there was a Christian there; and at midnight she was there at the grave of Padre Tommaso. And, of course, I need not tell you that there was a naked boy hidden in a cedar tree, over their heads, lying flat upon his face upon a thick branch which he held between his thighs and with his arms, and looking right down upon the grave. Then there came out of the convent Fra Giovannino, Fra Lorenzo, Fra Sebastiano, and Fra Guilhelmo. And if I had not remembered that a naked boy in a cedar-tree was not one of the things which you are unable to do without at a midnight funeral, I should have laughed, because these friars, coming out of their convent without candles, fell over the crosses on the graves and said things which friars do not say in their offices. They brought two spades and a bucket of holy water, and when they came to the grave of Padre Tommaso, Fra Sebastiano and Fra Guilhelmo dug about three feet of a hole over the Jesuit's head, then my mother gave them the box from under her cloak and they put it in the earth, and having sprinkled it with holy water, they covered it up, made the grave look as it had looked before as best they could in that dim light, and then returned to their convent, all the time saying no word aloud.

"Then my mother went back to the house of la Signora Pucci, and a boy without clothes followed her there. For one hour afterwards I ran backwards and forwards secretly from the convent

vent to the house of the respectable man, but finding that nothing else happened I went to my bed.

"About the end of the day after this my mother returned to her house, and said that the doctor had brought a nurse to la Signora Pucci, and that the respectable man her husband also was coming back, so there was nothing more for her to do. Then she swooned with weariness, for she was tired to death, but having rested some days while I and my sisters and my brothers kept the house clean and tidy, she recovered herself.

"And that is all the tale, sir.

"And I think you will see that these Capuccini, unless indeed they are entirely fools of the most stupid, and that they may be, have been urged on by envy of the Jesuit fathers to lay the beginnings of a plot which some day will cause a great scandal. You must see that they could not help the coming of the new baby to the house of the respectable man, and it is not for that that I blame them. You must see that when the new baby had come and died a Christian, there was nothing else for them to do but to bury it in their churchyard, and that secretly, to defend la Signora Pucci from shame. And, after all, you must see that there are yards and yards and yards of ground in that churchyard where this dead Christian baby Angelo could be buried by himself secretly, and that it is simply abominable to have to put him into the grave of a Jesuit, which, being opened as it may at any time—God knows when or why, but it is quite likely—will bring a great dishonour and a foul blot upon the sons of San Ignazio."

I said that I saw.

Two Poems

By Alma Strettell

I.—The Wind

(From the French of Emile Verhaeren)

CROSSING the infinite length of the moorland,
Here comes the wind,
The wind with his trumpet that heralds November ;
Endless and infinite, crossing the downs,
Here comes the wind
That teareth himself and doth fiercely dismember ;
With heavy breaths turbulent smiting the towns,
The savage wind comes, the fierce wind of November !

Each bucket of iron at the wells of the farmyards,
Each bucket and pulley, it creaks and it wails ;
By cisterns of farmyards, the pulleys and pails
They creak and they cry,
The whole of sad death in their melancholy.

The

The wind, it sends scudding dead leaves from the birches
 Along o'er the water, the wind of November,
 The savage, fierce wind;
 The boughs of the trees for the birds' nests it searches,
 To bite them and grind.
 The wind, as though rasping down iron, grates past,
 And, furious and fast, from afar combs the cold
 And white avalanches of winter the old,
 The savage wind combs them so furious and fast,
 The wind of November.

From each miserable shed
 The patched garret-windows wave wild overhead
 Their foolish, poor tatters of paper and glass,
 As the savage, fierce wind of November doth pass!
 And there on its hill
 Of dingy and dun-coloured turf the black mill,
 Swift up from below, thro' winter air slashing,
 Swift down from above, like a g-stroke flashing,
 The black mill so sinister mows the wind,
 The savage, fierce wind of November.

The old, ragged thatches that squat round their steeple,
 Are raised on their roof-poles, and fall with a clap,
 In the wind the old thatches and pent-houses flap,
 In the wind of November, so savage and hard.
 The crosses—and they are the arms of dead people—
 The crosses that stand in the narrow churchyard
 Fall prone on the sod
 Like some great flight of black, in the acre of God.

The

The wind of November !
Have you met him, the savage wind, do you remember ?
Did he pass you so fleet,
Where, yon at the cross, the three hundred roads meet—
With distressfulness panting, and wailing with cold ?
Yea, he who breeds fears and puts all things to flight,
Did you see him, that night
When the moon he o'erthrew—when the villages, old
In their rot and decay, past endurance and spent,
Cried, wailing like beasts, 'neath the hurricane bent ?

Here comes the wind howling, that heralds dark weather,
The wind blowing infinite over the heather,
The wind with his trumpet that heralds November !

II.—A Soldier's Farewell

(From a Roumanian Folk-Song)

*THOU wilt recall, to-morrow,
The sunshine of to-day—
And to the sun wilt say :
“ Art thou the same, the self-same sun indeed ? ”*

Full of dead leaves the path is
That to thy cottage leads,
But there within the cottage
The spring yet blooms for thee.
Thou rockest children's cradles

To the whirring of thy spindle ;
And the flowers see thee pass.
O wife, when death shall take me,
Let it never rest, thy spindle ;
When the flowers ask : "Where is he ?"
Make answer : "In his grave,
Yet still I rock his slumber
To the whirring of my spindle."
For to the wars I'm going ;
And on thy brow I kissed thee.
Pale grew thy brow, what time it felt my kiss.
Thou wilt be left all lonely
To watch our plain's glad shimmer ;
For I no more beside thee
Shall see the maize-fields ripen ;
But the blood's flowing, I shall see without thee.
And thou shalt tell my threshold :
"Although he has gone from us,
Yet he will come again ;"
And thou shalt tell my children :
"Yea, he will come again,"
But to thy heart shalt whisper : "He is dead."
Do thou bewail and mourn me
Within thy heart's deep silence,
As in the forest's silence
The turtle-doves lament.
Yet do not ever give me,
O wife, too many tears ;
Tears are step-sisters of forgetfulness ;
But with thy spindle's whirring
Tenderly rock my slumber,

And

And tell it of the harvests,
And plains where maize-fields ripen,
For earth loves fruitfulness,
And I could speak with her
Then, of her fruitfulness,
So that she might grow glad, there where I rest.

*Thou wilt recall, to-morrow,
The sunshine of to-day,
And to the sun wilt say:
"Art thou the same, the self-same sun indeed?"*

An Early Chapter

By H. Gilbert.

ARTHUR NEIL, "top-boy" in Scardell Road Board school, had one characteristic which none of his fellows could understand: he was always more willing to "make it up" than to fight. When Billy Leake, the squint-eyed fighter of the school, once called him a fool in the heat of chagrin while at play, Arthur, who hotly repelled all slights, had gone up and struck him lightly on the shoulder—the invariable challenge to fight. The school bell had sounded just then, and the elder boys went in warm with the expectation of a battle between two champions of different achievements. When school was over, however, and the two lads with their own set had retired to a quiet piece of ground, it was rumoured that Arthur had offered to accept an apology! The descending disgust was averted by the appearance of Billy, who threw off his coat, tucked up his sleeves, and stood ready—short, firmly built, frowning, his fists working, his jaw clenched and his fierce eyes unmistakably certain. But no one said Arthur was afraid; he stood up and got punished well, for he could not fight "for nuts"; and his onsets, though futile against the other's coolness and science, were reckless. After this, for some time, Billy and Arthur were great chums, were seldom apart in scrapes and took a great share together in the street fights with other schools.

It

It was Arthur Neil who organised secret societies among the bigger boys, composed cypher alphabets for the laborious communications between the members of these mysterious brotherhoods in neighbouring desks ; and kept the accounts of the weekly journal fund for the purchase and reading of Red Lion Court literature. He had been Grand Master of the short-lived Order of the Knights of Albion ; and the dubbing by him of a squire in one of the school corridors, with the adjuncts of green tunic, "cap of maintenance," dagger and real rapier—"a right Toledo blade"—was an unforgettable though furtive ceremony. When he picked out Murray's *Prairie Bird* for a prize, and after reading it lent it round to his friends, their enthusiasm fashioned moccasins and leggings (ornamented with worsted scalplocks) out of American cloth, made bows and arrows from umbrella ribs, tomahawks from blade bones and wood, and scalping knives from abstracted table cutlery, ripped up mattresses for war-plumes, and secreted all leather within reach. Arthur, with the advantages of a cap made of badly dressed rabbit skin, the green tunic (which, though slashed and puffed, could be made to serve many turns), belt, totem—a disc of bone hung by a leather boot-lace round his neck and having "a war eagle" scratched upon it—powder-horn, wooden gun and cross bow, was made chief of a band of half a dozen warriors, skulking in the dusky prairies and scarlet-runner forests of a back garden, until the mother of one of them—Terror of Palefaces—called him in to go to bed.

It was Arthur also who had suggested basket-lids for shields and "tolly-whacks" (rope knotted and twined in graduated thickness) for weapons, in the fights with other schools. Even the invention of this "stunning" mode of warfare had been marred by his weakness. The Scardell Road school was in a newly-opened suburb, and the boys, being mostly villa residents, had always despised

despised the neighbouring Delta Road school, it being second grade and situate near the gasworks. It was not known what this particular row was about—somebody had hit one of the Delta Road boys or jeered at them in passing, or something or other—anyway, the gas cads at length sent some big fellows and taunted the Scardell boys as they came out at mid-day. When the elders had attempted to avenge this, they had been beaten back by a hail of flints, taken from a heap by the road that was being made up. The Scardell boys had retired, hurt in mind and body, lusting for revenge and a flint heap. But Arthur, even then, when his fellows wished for nothing but the bodies of those boys half a street off, jeering in the security of their position, wanted to know what they had been fighting about! He had even advised a parley, and though some of the council were disposed to brand him a coward for his talk, he, notwithstanding the impatience and disgust of the others, went marching down the middle of the road holding up a white handkerchief. The Delta boys had seemed puzzled at first, and then one had thrown a stone and had been imitated by his fellows. The Scardell boys saw their disowned embassy stop and rub his leg and then turn, put his handkerchief away and limp back, accompanied by hopping flints. They told him "it served him cussed well right. What else could he expect from those gas cads?" Arthur said little, but came back from dinner thoughtful, and it was not long before every elder boy had fashioned a "tolly," and bought, begged, or stolen a basket lid, and fitted it with handles. Then when these had been smuggled to school, the Delta boys had been waylaid and wiped out, wealed and wailing.

There were many tender relations between the elder boys and girls of Scardell Road school; which reciprocity was encouraged by the head-master. Most of the scholars dropped in and out of love with the greatest ease. One week Bob Sullivan would be the
sweetheart

sweetheart of Nelly Tulford, who next week would enamour Billy Leake and flout Bob, who would recriminate contemptuously. But jilted boys seldom fought their more favoured fellows : they went and cut out some other friend, who consoled himself elsewhere.

Arthur Neil was the most sensitive to unsuccess or indifference, the most fastidious in choice and the most constant in attachment. His sweetheart, Winnie Alfrey, had been in turn the beloved of three of his best friends. She had indeed wounded the last of them by her confessed admiration for Arthur, who, though she was reckoned for the time being by favoured boys to be the prettiest girl in the school, had hitherto kept himself in studied coldness before the charms that were setting his friends in rivalry or chagrined depreciation.

His friend Alf Lawers had met Arthur one day on their way to school, and in the course of conversation said with momentary moodiness, "I'm going to chuck up Winnie Alfrey. You can have her if you like."

Arthur secretly glowed. "Why, what's the matter?" he asked. "What have you fallen out over?"

"She wants you. I ain't good enough for her."

"Stow it, Alf, don't talk such rot!" said the other, thrilling.

"It's the truth! All the girls are gone on you since you won that prize for reciting. Didn't you say the other day that that fat girl, Emily Goodchild, had sent you a note? Well, that's why!"

Arthur became thoughtful: he was desired, and with the self-esteem and impulse to wound that were characteristic of his semi-feminine nature was moved to play with the circumstance.

"You tell her from me she's had too many chaps already. I'm nearly sick of girls."

Alf subsequently told his friend that he and Winnie had had a volcanic separation. He had told her that if she wanted Arthur, Arthur didn't want her, on which she had angrily retorted that she didn't care for Arthur Neil, then that she didn't believe he had said it; and, on Alf persisting, had gone off almost crying, saying she believed it was a falsehood. Arthur regretted his friend's distorting and stubborn straightforwardness.

"You'd better tell her yourself, Art," said Alf.

"No," said the other, assuming indifference, "I shan't take any notice of her."

"Well, I shan't speak to her again," said Alf. "That new girl, Kate Dunmore, is a pretty girl. I shall go after her. She laughed at me this morning."

It fell out, however, that Winnie was taken ill and was away from school for a month. During her absence her brother Harry became a great friend of Arthur's, though he had hitherto been disliked by the latter as being spiteful and unfair. When Winnie returned to school, Arthur with some of his chums met her one day with a friend, and her appearance as she passed and looked at him—so pale, pretty, and yet proud—overcame him. Within a week many of the little boys, at safe distances, were calling after them as Arthur escorted her home from school, her satchel slung upon his back with his own.

This had happened quite a year ago, and still they were lovers. He even went out with her in the evenings and on Sundays, and was often at tea with her family.

The girl found that Arthur was not like her former sweethearts. In matters of endearment he was more shy than she was and had to be most coyly excited, or he would become cold and proud. This was very different from, say, Will Kemp's headiness. She had only to dare him and he would chase her half a mile and when
he

he had caught her there would be a delightful struggle for kisses. If she had ever dared Arthur in the same open way, she felt he would have left her. But there were compensations. Sometimes, he would be quite irresistible, exceeding in his dominance any other sweetheart, and then her coyness was intensified and deliciously rewarded. Those long spring and summer evenings spent in the chestnut avenue in the field behind her house, slowly walking in the twilight, when he would be so daring, so masterful and sweet! Then, again, he seemed to be so different in an indefinable way from other boys. He was not roughly impatient, or boisterously mocking. She hugged to herself the words passed by her mother one day when he was mentioned in the family—"he was a little gentleman!" She wondered she had not thought of this—of course he was. He wore his clothes better, spoke with more refinement and used different words. Besides, was he not the best scholar in the school?

One day Alf Lawers on his way home with Arthur from morning school said he had had another quarrel with Kate Dunmore. These two had been sweethearts (with intervals of mutual unfaithfulness for spite) since Alf had given up Winnie.

"She's so beastly proud. She says she's going on the stage at Liverpool soon with her mother."

Arthur's sympathy had been blunted by frequent exercise on behalf of his friend.

"When's she going to leave school, then?" he asked.

"Goodness knows! I don't believe half she says. She's been saying she's going to leave ever since she came."

"Aren't you going to try and make it up?"

Alf was moody for a moment, and made a wry face. "I don't know. Don't see any use."

"She's

"She's a jolly nice girl. I should if I were you."

Arthur felt a dislike to seeing his friend contemplate throwing away the pleasure he himself possessed.

"You wouldn't like to see Bob Sullivan with her, or Will Kemp, would you?"

Alf hesitated, looking at his boots as he walked.

"Oh, all right," he said. "I tell you what. Will you see her and say I'm sorry I offended her and if she'll make it up I'll be at the end lamp-post to-night in Menival Road? She knows the place."

"All right, but what did you offend her about?"

"Oh," said Alf laughing, "she said her mother was Queen of the Fairies last Christmas in a pantomime, and I said she must have been a jolly heavy fairy then. You know, her mother is *rather* stout."

"Girls don't like that, you know," said Arthur, gravely.

"It's the truth, anyway. It would have to be a moonbeam like a plank to hold her up." He laughed. "Anyhow, you catch her if you can after school and tell her I'm sorry and all that. You know how to put it."

Kate was the daughter of an actress at present "resting." She was pretty, plump, and bewitchingly frank. Arthur managed to meet her after school, though uneasy as to the result of giving Winnie the slip. All his pleading, however, was in vain. She didn't like Alf, and besides, she was to leave in a month or so for Liverpool, where she was going to act with her mother.

"He says he's very sorry he offended you," said Arthur.

"He says!" repeated Kate, in great disdain. "I'd smack his face, the cheeky thing! How would he like me to make game of *his* mother?"

"It certainly wasn't kind of him, but Alf always will get a laugh somehow."

"I'll

"I'll make him laugh the other side of his face."

"He always laughs both sides," said Arthur, slyly.

Kate looked at him with puzzled eyes for a moment. Then with some impatience, said, "Why, you're as cheeky as he is. You'd better go and find Winnie Alfrey or she'll be jealous."

"Not she," said Arthur.

"Dear me, has she got such confidence in you? Isn't she afraid of me?"

The lad chilled at once. "She doesn't think anything at all about you."

"Oh, very well. I'm sure I don't want to rob her. You'd better go and find her and tell her what I've said."

Arthur was hurt by this implication, and kept walking by her, she with her head up, looking intently at the hedge on the other side of the road.

"Don't be silly, Kate," he said at length, pleadingly.

"Miss Dunmore, please."

"Well, then, Miss Dunmore. I don't see why you turn off so. You quarrel with every one."

"It's a story! I don't make a row with anybody if they'll let me alone."

They were nearing her home in a quiet little street of villas.

"Well then, you won't meet Alf?"

"No, I won't, so you can tell him from me. Boys are such sillies."

She looked mischievously into his eyes.

"I wouldn't have another sweetheart for anything," she continued, "they're no good, and they are so awfully conceited."

They stopped in front of the house in the shade of a small maple tree.

"You're jolly rough on us," said Arthur laughing. "But if you

you girls weren't so nice we shouldn't be so conceited. It's your fault." He thrilled at his own daring before the provoking look.

"How do you mean, nice?" she asked, with little wrinkles round her eyes and lips.

"Well—jolly and—and pretty."

"Oh," she said, with a little laughing cry, her face flushing, "What sauciness! to dare to say that to any one!"

"Well, it's the truth!" said the lad, bolder in the sight of her pleasure.

She laughed, prettily confused, looking at him for a moment and then dropping her eyes, her face all warm.

"I think we'd better say good-bye," she said. "I shall never forget this."

She held out her hand, and retained his.

"Tell Alf I really can't meet him to-night. But I'll think about it. After all, when we go away, I shan't see him ever again perhaps. You will tell him, won't you?" she asked, softly, with a curious, dilated look.

"Certainly," replied the boy.

She drew him by the hand quickly and kissed him on the lips. He started back, glancing about, and looked at her coldly, then seeing her defiant, shamed face he half laughed.

"Whatever are you doing, Kate?" he asked.

"That was for Alf," she said.

"But I can't give it to Alf!"

She laughed merrily as she closed the wooden gate. She stood leaning over it, and looked at him with bright eyes.

"It was for you, then."

His eyes chilled as he thought of the appearance of unfaithfulness to Winnie if he did not in some way discard the caress.

"I wish you hadn't done that," he said.

"Oh,

"Oh, are you frightened?" she asked mockingly. Her eyes dilated again. "Then give it me back." She broke into gentle merriment as his face stiffened.

"I think you are most deceitful," he said. "You had no right, you shouldn't have done it. I shall never forgive you."

"Oh, very well, go and tell every one a girl kissed you and you didn't like it!" Her tone changed to scorn. "If you tell any one, I'll have to leave the school at once. You would be a coward!" Her voice faltered.

"I would never do that. I should never think of such a thing." He spoke with great heat.

"Very well, then, don't be silly. What have you got to be upset about? Good-bye."

She went up the path and rang the bell, and continued standing with her head bent and her back to him. He hesitated for some moments, and then as the door was opened went away slowly.

Alf heard no more from Kate in spite of the hope the message implied. She was about to pass him one day in the street with a contemptuous look, but he stopped her, saying,

"Aren't you going to speak to me again, Kate?"

"Speak to you?" she said disdainfully, "No, go away. What do you mean stopping me like this?" She tried to shake off his hold.

He was astounded at this complete change.

"Why, you said you'd think about it," he blurted angrily, loosing his hold on her arm.

"Pooh!" she ejaculated, slipping away.

He stood for some moments gloomily watching her, but she did not turn her head.

For ten days after this Alf was a fervid misogynist. His humour flickered up for a moment, he said that they might spifficate him
if

if he was ever done any more by an Irish girl. Later he generalised his chagrin, saying, "All girls are cads." He and Arthur nearly fell out, for he began making contemptuous reflections on girls and the boys who debased themselves. He went about almost estranged, with a gloomy look on his face which he was always forgetting to keep there ; going for long walks among the maimed fields and lanes near by, either by himself or with some school-mate not amatively degenerate. He began to long for the life of the trapper, lonely, void of all sentimental "rot," sternly self-contained, despising the admiration and yearning which he himself excited—a superior Dr. Carver, with long black hair, a broad sombrero, a stern and melancholy countenance, and a beautiful buckskin suit. He therefore began to get in training. He discarded braces, and wore a belt, broke the habit of regular meals, and in the dinner hour would wander off into the meadows, learning "wood-lore," following trails, remarking and laboriously explaining the meaning of a broken twig or bent. He would stealthily creep along, following birds flitting in and out the hedge-rows, keenly observant meanwhile of every movement in the herbage and the dead leaves about him. Sometimes he got the cramp when some particularly promising noise attracted him, and he would stop in a constrained position waiting for developments that never came, except in the shape of a small beetle or a worm rustling under the leaves. If anybody passed, he would whistle and try to appear as if he were doing nothing in particular. When his stomach craved he gloomily took in another hole of his belt. Sometimes he ate the young tops of the thorn. He would return to afternoon school, stern, silent, and hungry, in figure like a wasp.

As his mother did not trouble herself much about his absence from the dinner-table, and nobody else seemed to know or care
what

what he was doing, he soon descended again to braces, good dinners, games and love-making.

A few evenings after the affair with Kate, Arthur met Winnie in the field at the back of her house. She looked at him coldly, and retreated before his proffered caress.

"You're a deceitful thing, Arthur Neil," she said. "Go to that girl Dunmore and kiss her, not me. I wonder you can look me in the face."

"I didn't——" Arthur began hotly, and stopped. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"Oh, you know what I mean, very well. You kissed Kate Dunmore. She says you did. I want nothing more to do with you."

Winnie was coldly self-contained, but her appearance—so prettily proud, her lips curling, and her grey eyes piercing—excited the lad.

"It isn't true, Winnie, really, dear."

"But she says you did, and you told her she was pretty—and—and such stuff as that! I'm ashamed of you. You'd better go to her, for I won't speak to you again."

The lad was silent; he did not know what to do. He felt that Kate's apparent falsehood released him, but he revolted from the exposure of her, the breaking of his implied promise, and the prospect of pleading to a girl who condemned him without hearing him.

"I tell you it isn't true," he said, soberly. "Can't you believe me?"

Winnie hesitated before his seriousness. She dropped her eyes, and then raised them. She looked so pretty with her dignity, that it was in the lad's mind to rush upon her and kiss away her doubt, but his piqued loyalty held him back.

"Will

"Will you say you didn't kiss her—and say those things?" she said.

"I didn't kiss her."

She noticed his reservation, looked at him sharply, and flung away with "I don't believe you. You did say it!" She stopped a few feet off.

"Very well, I did say she was pretty—and—and so she is!"

She gave him a quick glance of scorn.

"Then you may go and tell her so again. I hate you." She spoke with composure, and turning, walked away quickly. Arthur did not hesitate, and went out of the field with head up, whistling.

On subsequent evenings, coming from school while Arthur was waiting to catch Kate for her explanation of things, Winnie passed him with cold eyes, that looked through him, her lips curled; though her brother Harry had confided to Arthur that she had "cried her eyes out" on that fateful evening, and had been cross ever since.

It seemed evident that Kate was keeping out of the way, and it was not for a week that he met her, when it happened that, having been sent, in his capacity as monitor, to a neighbouring school, he was returning just as the girls were coming out, and came face to face with Kate, in the van of chattering pupils. She was confused, and tried to push past him, her shocked companions bidding him, with much laughter, giggles, and reproach, to leave her alone. He succeeded in drawing her apart, however, and felt she was not unwilling, when free of her friends.

"I say, Kate," he began, with gentle reproof, "why did you tell Winnie that?"

She kept her head bent, her cheek suffused.

"I'm very sorry, Arthur, really. I didn't think she'd go off in
such

such a passion, but—but we were talking about you and Alf, and she made me cross, and I said it before I knew what I was saying. Don't you think she'd make it up if I told her the truth?"

"I wouldn't be friends again," said the lad, decisively. "She's been very nasty about it, and wouldn't believe what I said."

"You didn't say——" The girl stopped, and averted her face.

"No; I didn't tell her anything about that. If she hadn't been in such a temper I might, and, really, Kate, it would have served you right."

A moment's silence. "It was rather—it was mean of me, wasn't it?" She turned up her flushing face and pleading eyes for a moment. "I didn't deserve your not telling her, I'm sure, and I'm truly sorry."

Arthur caught his breath. "There's no need for that, Kate." A few thrilling seconds passed.

"Well, I must get back to school," he said at length, with an effort. "I'm afraid we've been walking out of your way."

"Not at all," she replied as they stopped.

He stood, trying to catch her eyes, but she evaded his look.

"Well, then, Kate, good-bye," he said, seizing both her hands. She turned her limpid eyes upon his with a daring smile. Her full, red lips moved slightly, but she did not speak. Her frankness thrilled him, and he kissed her, vaguely feeling as if powerless to restrain himself. She laughed softly, and a deeper warmth swept into her face.

"Was that the one I gave you the other day?"

"No, no," he said, laughing and flushing.

She watched his face, her eyes travelling to the curly dark hair over the forehead that the blue cricket cap never imprisoned.

"That was for you," he added.

"I thought

"I thought you said you'd never forgive me?" she said, her eyes bright with meriment.

"That was different. It's all right now. I told Winnie herself what I said to you, and that quite turned her. But, you see, she wanted me to say you weren't—jolly, you know."

"Did you really say that, Arthur?" Her eyes shone. "Well, there!"

She laughed a little hysterically.

"We must keep this quiet, Kate. It would be too bad to hurt her any more, though she has made herself silly."

"Oh, all right," said the girl, hesitating. "Can you come out to-night? I'm going to play tennis in the meadows."

They arranged a meeting-place, kissed again, and parted, turning every few steps to kiss their hands, until a bend in the road hid them from each other.

The furtive love-making of the next month was the most delightful either had ever enjoyed. Arthur was chary of publicity, since he felt his conduct might be thought disloyal to Alf, though the latter was now enamoured of the fat girl, Emily Goodchild, who joked and punned worse than he. Arthur also shrank from causing annoyance to Winnie, but he feared she would soon know the swift defection that must convince her of his falseness. Kate's secret, under the usual strict injunctions, spread among her own set, and elsewhere; but Winnie kept a proud reserve that sometimes moved her rival to pity and shy overtures of peace, which, for the time, were chilled to constraint as stubborn, by Winnie's uncompromising repulsion.

On the eve of Kate's departure, she, with Arthur and his closest friend, spent the last few hours together. The girl was one moment in excited talk about her dress, and the expected pleasures of her new life; but next moment, checking herself, would

would express regret in eyes, tones, and words, saying that she would send him her address, and they would write to each other. In the darkness, the friend, at a distance, witnessed their separation. He saw them talk awhile, kiss, and part sedately ; but they looked back, stopped, and then rushed together again, with arms about each other. A few moments' close embrace, the sound of many caresses, and she darted away quickly. Arthur lingeringly rejoined his companion, and they went away, silent.

A Ballad and a Tale

By B. Paul Neuman

I.—The Heavenly Lover

I

It was the joyful sunrise hour,
The world beneath her lay unrolled,
As from the highest nunnery tower
She watched the shadows turn to gold.

The glistening glory climbed the sky,
It touched the height, and searched the vale.
The forest laid its sackcloth by,
And all its songsters fluted "Hail!"

The splendour lit the slumbering town,
The crowded haunt of busy man,
She looked through tears that trickled down,
Chafing against the iron ban

That

That barred her from the world whose stir
Makes every morn a glad surprise.
That happy world was not for her,
Save to behold with yearning eyes.

For her the damp and moss-grown walls,
The changeless order of the days,
The fellowship of patient thralls,
The loud monotony of praise.

She wrung her hands, "Oh hearts of stone!
To cage a little fluttering dove,
Had I but known! Had I but known!
I still were free for life and love.

"Thou Heavenly Lover, who, they said,
Wouldst come to woo, and stay to win,
Was it a lie, or art thou dead
Or hast thou seen and spurned my sin?"

She mourned like any prisoned bird,
Her breast upon the stonework bowed,
Till with a guilty start she heard
A voice that called her, clear and loud.

II

There came a knocking at the gate.
The wondering portress opened wide;
With lowly mien, in piteous state
A white-haired beggar stood outside.

A Ballad and a Tale

His head all bare, his feet unshod,
In coarsest garments scanty clothed,
Upon his face the brand of God—
The awful scars men feared and loathed.

"The meek-eyed sisters held aloof,
But, pointing to a wooden shed,
"A couch of straw, a sheltering roof,
And food are there," the abbess said.

"And who"—she cast her eyes around—
"Will tend this leper for the sake
Of Him who once on holy ground
The leper's bond of misery brake?"

In silent fear they stood, and shame,
Their eyes cast down, their cheeks ablaze,
Then from her tower the novice came
With hurrying step and wondering gaze.

"You called me?" "Nay," they cried, "not we."
"I heard the summons, and obeyed."
"Then go," the abbess said, "and see
The burden that is on you laid."

She heard a tremor in the voice,
The pity in their eyes she saw,
But duty left no room for choice,
The leper called her from his straw.

She

III

She raised the latch and stepped within,
The dimness seemed to strike her blind,
She felt the pangs of fear begin
To shake the purpose of her mind.

When, lo! as o'er the horizon rim
The great sun looks on tropic seas,
And laughs, and at the sight of him
With one quick throb the darkness flees,

So, suddenly a point of light
Shone forth, then burst into a flame,
The shadows spread their wings for flight,
And o'er the gloom a glory came.

The ashen laths were cedar wood,
The flagstones priceless marble gleamed,
The bed a jewelled wonder stood,
Such wonder never poet dreamed.

And there were trees with soaring stems,
And spreading leaves of gorgeous hue,
And dazzling fruits that shone like gems,
And over all an arch of blue.

The lengthening walls were edged with flowers,
The air was fresh with odours sweet,
White blossoms fell in noiseless showers
And made a pathway for her feet.

And on the bed as on a throne,
He sat for whom her soul had yearned,
A tender radiance round Him shone,
But o'er His head the aureole burned.

"And hast Thou come indeed?" she cried,
"And wilt Thou love me for Thine own,
And one day set me at Thy side,
Yea even share with me Thy throne?"

Then as she felt the splendour grow,
And brighter beams of radiance shine,
She cast her down, and whispered low :
"Nay, not Thy throne, Thy footstool mine."

IV

With gentle words He bade her rise,
And smiled away her new-born fear,
"Come forth," He said, "for Paradise,
The home of those who love, is here."

The narrowing bounds of time and space
Were straight abolished and forgot,
One glance at that beloved face,
And earthly memories irked her not.

He led her by broad-bosomed streams
Whose waters sparkled clear and blue,
By forests flecked with golden gleams,
And all was fair, and all was new.

The very air she breathed seemed strange,
 Strange forms of life stood everywhere,
 On everything was written change,
 And all was new and all was fair.

With joy she yielded up her will,
 The hours might crawl, the æons fly,
 It seemed they two were standing still
 While time, and life, and death rushed by.

Great cities rose before their eyes
 And fell again to dusty sleep,
 They saw the star of empire rise,
 And sink into the stormy deep.

They saw a long-drawn vast array
 Whose numbers none could count or guess,
 Climbing a rugged stony way,
 And faint with heat and weariness.

Not one small world alone engrossed
 The scene on which their eyes were bent,
 To this great struggling suffering host
 A thousand stars their legions sent.

Yet all she looked on seemed but naught
 (Though everywhere new marvels lay),
 Compared to one entrancing thought—
"He loves, has loved, will love for aye."

One longing still her soul possessed,
"Lord, speak Thy love," she whispering, cried.
Smiling, he laid her fears to rest ;
"For love of Thee, the leper died."

v

With trembling steps, when evening fell,
The abbess sought the lowly shed,
"Did you not hear the vesper bell ?
Come forth, and rest, my child," she said.

But there was silence. Greater fear
Cast out the less. She pushed the door,
And on the threshold paused to peer
Into the gloom that lowered before.

Her feeble lamp she held on high,
And by its flickering flame she saw
A slender childish figure lie
Stretched out beside the empty straw.

With such a smile upon the face,
And such a gladness in the eyes ;
The abbess from her vantage-place
A little sternly bade her rise.

In vain : no more the iron rule
Could bind the soul that yearned to roam,
From hard routine of dreariest school ;
The Lord of Love had borne her home.

II.—The Uttermost Farthing

I

JOHN CROFTS and William Medlett had been friends for many years. They had come to London together as young men from the same small country town. Nay, their friendship ran back to a still earlier date, for they had been at the same grammar school, and had sung as choir-boys in the same old parish church. And now, as middle-aged men, they had a rare fund of ancient memories and associations to fall back on, trivial reminiscences that had a singular interest for them—for them and for no one else

This formed, no doubt, the real basis of their friendship, such as it was. Their acquaintances, sacred and profane, talked of David and Jonathan, and of Damon and Pythias ; but both these comparisons were ludicrously inappropriate. There did not exist in the composition of either of the friends one single grain of poetry or romance.

Nor were they clever men. Of the two, perhaps Medlett was the brighter, he certainly had more self-confidence. On the other hand, Crofts had more perseverance, and rather more taste for reading. On the whole, the difference in their abilities was so slight, that for many years they kept a fairly even progress up the hill of success. They had each obtained employment in a large wholesale business—Crofts with Barston and Franks, the great hosiery firm, Medlett with Coningsby, Lord, and Whaler, who ruled the markets in the matter of waterproofing and rubber goods.

Beginning

Beginning as office boys at eight shillings a week, they had steadily worked their way up, till Crofts was head of the woollen department with a salary of three hundred a year, while Medlett acted as a kind of general sub-manager with an income of fifty pounds a year more.

They had both married: Crofts when he was about five and twenty, his friend a few years later. In consequence, the former had been burdened with a growing family, while the latter was still free to save the greater part of his salary. Crofts had found it a hard struggle, and once or twice had been obliged to borrow from his friend, who lent readily enough, only taking a bill of sale on the furniture as a matter of form.

"Better do the thing in a businesslike way," he said, as he made the suggestion, and Crofts was glad to agree.

Before very long, however, he was able to repay the loans, for his wife inherited, on the death of her mother, a sum of between three and four thousand pounds. On the strength of this he moved from Holloway to St. John's Wood, and sent his children to good schools.

His family consisted of five children—two girls and three boys. The eldest, Nora, was a dark, rather plain girl, with straight, black hair, marked eyebrows, a thin, firm mouth, and a square chin and jaw. Next to her came two boys, Jack and Will, of whom there is little to say but that they were very ordinary, English, middle-class schoolboys, rather dull at their books, but well-meaning, wholesome lads. Then came Jane, named after her mother, dark as Nora, but of a slighter and more delicate build, inclined to be pretty, and her father's favourite. Edward brought up the rear, a little slip of a boy with flaxen hair and a snub nose, very precocious, and, already, at seven, winning prizes at his school.

By this time Medlett had married, and had come to live in Woronzow Road, a few doors from his friend. They travelled to and from business together, and found new themes of conversation and discussion in their family experiences.

The years passed on, bringing to the two, only very gradual changes. Their children grew up, and, curiously enough, showed no inclination to be friendly. This may have been partly due to the fact that their wives only just tolerated each other. Mrs. Crofts, perhaps on the strength of her inheritance, was a little inclined to play the great lady, while Mrs. Medlett was abnormally quick to resent the faintest suggestion of patronage. But the heads of the two families continued their habits of intercourse undisturbed by these domestic differences. They had grown so accustomed to travelling and gossiping together, each looked upon the other as a necessary part of his life. Affection between them there was none. In the bosom of his family Crofts often let fall queer little remarks depreciatory of his friend, and Medlett, in his own way, did much the same.

One morning, as they were sitting together on the omnibus, Medlett remarked :

"I wish I had a lot of money to invest. I was told of a first-class thing yesterday."

"There are so many first-class things," said Crofts, sententiously.

"Yes, but this is a real *bonâ fide*" (he docked this last word of one of its syllables) "concern. Plenty of capital and real good people. One of our governors put me on it. It's a new motor."

"A new what?" asked Crofts.

"A new motor for driving wheels; it will work a stationary engine, or a sewing machine, or a carriage. It can be made in any size, and burns petroleum."

"Has

"Has it been tried?"

"Oh, yes, that's the beauty of it. It isn't just an inventor's notion. It's been working in the States for some time now and the American company is doing a roaring trade. This company is being formed to work the patent over here."

Crofts shook his head.

"It sounds rather risky to me," he said, "if I were you I should take good care before I put a penny in."

Medlett laughed.

"Oh I've gone into it over and over again. It's as sound as a thing can be. Of course there's always some risk, but it's a perfectly genuine business. I don't call it speculative. Trust Mr. Whaler for that. He's one of the safest men I know to follow."

There the conversation dropped for the time, but a week or ten days later Crofts recurred to it.

"Have you taken any shares in that company?" he asked.

"What company?" replied the other, as if he were in the habit of making investments every other day.

"You know. That motor business."

"Oh yes, of course. Well, I've put a few hundreds in."

Crofts knew that a few hundreds would represent all the savings of many years, and he was considerably impressed with this proof of his friend's faith.

"What interest do you expect to get?" he asked.

"Well, Whaler says that the American company pays twelve per cent. on the original shares, and that they are steadily rising in the market. He thinks we shall certainly pay seven the first year, and go on rising. Only last Saturday he said, 'You mark my words, in five years time those ten pound shares will be worth thirty.'"

"Two hundred per cent., eh?" remarked Crofts, and fell a-thinking.

Nora was always bothering to take lessons in music, and painting, and dancing. She was not exactly her father's favourite, but he stood a little in awe of her. She could be very outspoken, could Nora, and then what a will she had! And with the children all growing up, expenses seemed to increase by leaps and bounds. And whenever Mrs. Crofts was in favour of some expensive alteration or innovation, she always made objection difficult, by suggesting that her money was available for the purpose. A substantial increase in their income would be an enormous relief. As for the risk, Medlett was no speculator, and besides he was acting under good advice.

A few days after, as they were returning from town, Crofts remarked to his companion with rather elaborate carelessness.

"By-the-by have you a prospectus or anything of that motor company you were speaking about the other day?"

"Yes, I think I have it here," said Medlett, and as he spoke he took out his pocket-book and drew forth a paper. "You can keep it if you like," he added, "I have another copy at home."

Crofts took it home and studied it with great care. It was skilfully drawn and was backed by a fine array of names.

Finally he introduced the subject to his wife. She was by nature rather cautious, and at first pooh-poohed the idea altogether. But gradually he wore down her objections, and in her desire for a larger income she let suspicion sleep, and believed very much what she wished to believe.

And so at last, after many doubts and much discussion, a thousand pounds of Mrs. Crofts' inheritance was invested in shares of the Limpan Motor, Limited. The dividends were paid half-yearly, and after the second payment at the rate of six and a half per cent, Crofts with his wife's full assent sold out the remainder of her stocks, and invested the proceeds in a new issue
of

of motor shares. In the course of one of their many conversations he mentioned to his friend the fact that he had put more of his eggs into this basket, but exactly how many, he did not say.

Then Medlett had his stroke of luck. An old aunt had left him, some years before, a small house at Brixton, let as a baker's shop. The baker was unfortunate, and the rent fell in arrear. Medlett without being cruel, was not particularly soft-hearted, and talked of distraining. The tenant pointed out that it was not by any means every one's house, that it would very likely be empty for some time, and that in such an event the goodwill of the business would be utterly lost. He admitted he could not carry it on himself any longer, but he suggested that Medlett should take it over, and put him in as manager at a small salary, with the use of two or three rooms, letting the rest of the house as lodgings. Medlett's solicitor, whom he consulted, strongly advised him to accept the tenant's terms, and offered to advance him any reasonable sum on the security of the house. A new railway was projected which would probably pass through the street, and might have to take the premises. Then there would be compensation for disturbance. Medlett admired and agreed. The lawyer was speedily justified. The railway did come, the house was required, and the owner of the premises and proprietor of the goodwill, received a really handsome sum as compensation. Medlett's first idea was to invest the whole of the proceeds in Limpan Motor shares, if that were possible. He thought it might perhaps please Mr. Whaler, as well as give him a better idea of his sub-manager's social position, if he told him of his intention. To his great surprise his principal strongly dissuaded him.

"I don't feel easy about those Limpans," he said. "I was going to speak to you about them. They're going back in the market
without

without any apparent reason. It looks as if somebody knew something. I've a great mind to get out at a small loss." And a few days after, he came into Medlett's room and told him he was instructing his broker to sell.

"If I were you I should do so too ; they may be all right but I don't like the look of them," he said ; and Medlett determined to follow suit, and did so, losing something like £50 on the transaction.

As it happened, Crofts was away on his holiday at this time, but of course there would have been no difficulty in communicating with him. And Medlett felt as though he ought to let his friend know what he was doing. Yet he felt also a strong reluctance to do so. He had praised the investment so highly, had spoken with such an air of authority as to the unassailable position of the Company, he felt sure Crofts would twit him mercilessly on the mistake he had made. Besides, he kept assuring himself, there was probably no real occasion for selling. Nay, it might be wiser to keep in, for getting out now would mean a serious loss. At any rate he would wait a bit and watch the market. If the shares kept on falling, he would give Crofts a word of warning as soon as he came back from his holiday.

But while Crofts was luxuriating at Margate there came to him, forwarded from Woronzow Road, an important-looking official envelope bearing the seal of the Limpan Motor, Limited.

"A bonus so soon !" he exclaimed as he opened it. Then the next minute he horrified his eldest daughter, who happened to be sitting in the room with him, by jerking out a couple of vulgar, dirty oaths such as she had never before heard him use. She looked up astonished.

"Why, what ever is the matter ? " she asked. "Bad news ? "

"Hold

"Hold your tongue, and don't speak till you're spoken to," he answered, roughly.

The letter that had so upset him, was simply a call of thirty shillings on each of his three hundred Limpan shares. They were ten pounds shares, seven pounds ten paid up. He remembered speaking to Medlett about the liability, but his friend had assured him there was no likelihood of any further call being made for a long time to come. If there should be, he had added, and it were inconvenient to pay the call, the shares could always be sold. That was what must be done, and at once, too. It would be all he could do to find £450, and then there was the remaining pound still liable to be called up. Decidedly it would be well to get rid of them without delay.

He hurried up to town, and went straight to the office of the broker through whom he had bought. As soon as he indicated the object of his coming, the broker shook his head.

"Limpan? Oh, dear, that's a bad business. You don't mean to say you've been holding on. Why we advised our regular clients to get out six weeks ago. Sell at a small loss! My dear sir, it's not to be done. There's simply no market for them. A few big men are holding on, just on the off chance of their pulling round. With that liability, no man in his senses would give a threepenny piece for the lot."

"But what's the matter with the company?" gasped the unhappy Crofts.

The broker shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm sure I can't say exactly. There's some roguery over in America, and the English directors are not a very gay lot—two M.P.'s and a speculating parson on the board; you know the kind of thing. I never really liked it."

"But

"But it was you that bought the shares for me!" cried Crofts, longing for some one on whom to fasten the blame.

Again the broker gave a little shrug.

"I suppose I acted on your instructions; you have certainly never been one of our regular clients."

"No, it was Medlett who made me do it; he'll be pretty hard hit, too."

"Medlett? Medlett? Oh, yes, I know. He's all right. He sold his shares with Mr. Whaler's in one lot."

"When?" snapped Crofts.

"Oh, three weeks or a month ago. They nearly left it till too late. As it was, they dropped a bit over it. But they soon recouped themselves. Everything they've touched since has gone all right. They did a splendid thing in Argentines last week, and got out just before the fall. Good-day."

For Crofts, without a word, had suddenly turned his back and rushed out of the office.

The very next morning he laid wait for Medlett on his way to town and had a violent quarrel with him. In spite of their long and close association there had never been any real affection to hold them together. Of late years especially, there had been many little jealousies. The Medlett children were much better-looking than the young Crofts, and were certainly dressed in better taste. Then Medlett on the strength of his intimacy with Mr. Whaler, had taken to assuming airs that irritated Crofts. And now it was gall and wormwood to Crofts to think that while he had been left to be robbed and swindled, the man who had led him to make the investment, had not only escaped unscathed, but had actually reaped no little gain.

Medlett was genuinely shocked at the news, and if Crofts had not immediately put him on his defence he would certainly have offered

offered at least temporary help. But when assailed with the most violent reproaches, accused of having deliberately and with sinister motives induced his friend to take the shares, and then purposely left him to be robbed, he soon lost his temper and told Crofts he had no one but himself to thank for his loss, and that if he hadn't the sense to watch the market, he might at least have got some one to do it for him. The very fact that he was conscious of a neglect of duty made him more sensitive to reproach, and he felt it quite a relief to be able to bluster with some show of reason. Before they parted he did, however, try to patch up the quarrel, and made his offer of assistance with some reference to their long friendship. But Crofts was too angry to listen.

"Friendship?" he snarled. "There's an end of that, thank God. That's one good thing at least out of all this. No, I've done with you and yours for good and all. Jenny will be glad of that. Often and often she's begged me to have nothing more to do with you. *They're a low lot.* Those were her very words. I wish I'd listened to her."

Medlett was angry too, by this time.

"*Low*, indeed," he answered; "I like that. You can just tell your Jenny that if it hadn't been for me, you'd have been sold up long ago, you and she, and brats and all."

They were crossing Manchester Square. Their loud voices, and violent gestures, for they had both lost control of themselves, had excited attention, and several people turned round as they passed. Crofts incensed by the other's last remark, would certainly have struck him, had not a judicious policeman who had been quietly following them for some little distance, come up and touched his arm:

"Now then, gentlemen, *if* you please——"

They both started, for the appearance of the man in uniform recalled

recalled them to themselves. Crofts crossed the road hastily, while Medlett hailed a passing hansom and drove down to the City.

And, there, for many a long day, all intercourse between them ceased. Medlett indeed was astute to prevent any chance meetings, changing his routes and times. But Crofts took no such precautions, and rather gloried at the opportunity of scowling at, or turning his back upon his ancient crony.

Meanwhile the Limpan Motor had, under the safe conduct of an eminent firm of city solicitors, rapidly gone from bad to worse, and from worse into voluntary liquidation. Crofts attended every meeting he possibly could, having recourse to all kinds of excuses to account to Messrs. Barston and Franks for his frequent absences. Coming away from one of these meetings he made the acquaintance of two other shareholders who were also full of their losses. Their common misfortune made them mutually sympathetic. Half an hour spent together in a neighbouring Bodega strengthened the tie so much that, from a general brooding over their wrongs, they advanced to a resolve to take concerted action to right themselves. The two treated Crofts with deference for they had only two or three hundred apiece in the Limpan. One of them mentioned the name of a solicitor he knew in Basinghall Street, a real good man and no mistake, up to every dodge. Crofts agreed at once—the description attracted him in his present mood. Whereupon the others suggested that he should go down and instruct Mr. Pledgcut.

“You seem to understand all about the law,” they added. He accepted with a sense of importance; it was about the first pleasant feeling he had experienced since the crash.

But now he began to realise the truth of the venerable maxim, that the law is a jealous mistress. His constant brooding over his wrongs,

wrongs, and his possible remedies, were sadly interfered with by the demands upon his time made by Messrs. Barston and Franks. And there came an hour when in spite of all his ingenious and plausible excuses, he received a warning from his employers, so forcible, and so free from ambiguity, that for a time at least, he resumed his habits of regular and punctual attendance.

Meantime his losses had entailed great changes at home. With an income diminished by a third, it was impossible to go on living at Woronzow Road. They were fortunate in being able to sub-let their house from the next quarter day, and thereupon moved to a smaller one at Kilburn. This involved a considerable sacrifice of household gods, over every one of which Mrs. Crofts shed weak and irritating tears. Indeed the poor woman became a sad burden to herself, and to her husband. She could not forget that it was her money that had been lost, or rather her dear mother's, and was constantly invoking that awful shade to behold the ruin and desolation that a husband's recklessness had brought about. In prosperity she had been rather a fine-looking woman with what young Frank Medlett called "no end of cheap side upon her." Now it was pitiful to see the way in which she collapsed. Lifeless, spiritless, she spent the mornings in bed, the rest of the day in the parlour, her hands in her lap, bewailing their misfortunes, and cultivating a crop of ailments, which whatever they may have been originally, soon became real enough to justify a doctor's visits. And so by a kind of tacit abdication the reins of domestic power slipped from her nerveless grasp into the keeping of her eldest daughter.

Nora was at this time just past her majority. She was a plain girl, the outline of her face being too square, and the features too strongly marked for beauty, but her dark eyes were unmistakably fine and her hair was like black silk. She had from the first espoused

espoused her father's quarrel with a fierceness that sometimes over-awed him. The deterioration of his character which had already begun to appear, the illness and incompetence of her mother—these were to her so many items entered in that long account which she hoped one day to present to Medlett for payment. As each fresh shadow fell across their path, she arraigned her father's enemy anew, and thought with fierce and gloomy satisfaction of the day of reckoning.

Meanwhile economy had to be rigidly practised. She had an instinctive horror of running up bills, but every month she found it harder and harder to get money from her father for the ordinary household expenses. She suspected that he was spending more than he could afford on the lawyers, but besides this she soon discovered that there was another and a more humiliating reason. One night he came in very late—it was after midnight. She had been sitting mending the boys' socks. She went into the hall with her candle, and there, vainly trying to put his umbrella in the stand, stood her father obviously, unmistakably drunk. There was a dreadful kind of half simper on his face as though he were conscious of his condition, and could not quite make up his mind whether to try and conceal it, or to carry it off as a joke. She saved him the trouble of decision. One low cry she uttered of shame and disgust, then set her candle down on the stairs and rushed up to her bedroom. For the first time since their troubles began she gave way to despair. But even then she did not forget to lay this too at the door of their enemy, and the larger part of her prayer that night was concerned with him.

From this time things went still worse with the devoted family. The elder boys were taken from school. They were both wild to go to sea, and through the good offices of the clergyman whose church they attended, this was arranged, though their necessary

outfit was only procured with the very greatest difficulty. Then Mrs. Crofts took a severe chill, and having apparently no particular desire to live, passed away, feebly lamenting her troubles, and prophesying unutterable things to come. Again Nora had desperate work to get from her father the money for the funeral. And in order to pay for mourning for herself and Jane, she had to begin giving music lessons, the clergyman's little girls being her first pupils. The loss of his wife, so far from steadying Crofts, seemed to have exactly the opposite effect. For some time after that evening when he had horrified Nora, he had mounted guard over himself, and taken good care there should be no repetition of the scene in the hall. Now he relaxed his efforts, and took small pains to conceal his weakness. And so the housekeeping supplies grew harder and harder to obtain, and Nora was driven more and more to depend upon her own earnings to eke out her father's small and spasmodic cheques.

One momentary thrill of joy came to her. It was on the morning when Jane came running in, full of the news that there was a board up at the Medletts' house. She was astonished to see her sister's dark eyes light up, and an exultant smile transfigure her countenance.

"I knew it would come," she said. "God is just."

The younger girl was much impressed, but a few days after, she brought in the information that, far from implying disaster, the move only meant a great rise up the social ladder. The Medletts had taken a large new house at Hampstead, near the Heath. This time Nora said not a word, but the expression of her face as she bent over her work was so hard and forbidding, the child was afraid to pursue the subject.

Before their troubles Nora had felt little, and had professed still less interest in religion. She had attended church as regularly as she considered

considered the conventions demanded, and she had been obliged to "get up" one of the gospels at school. But when the blow fell, she began to feel an awful joy in the stern sanctions of the moral law. Her own prayers, once so empty and formal, suddenly became a living reality when she found that in them she could summon her enemy to answer at the judgment seat of God. And now as she thought of his prosperity, and compared it with what she called their undeserved misfortunes, she felt as she had never felt before, the need of some new life to redress the wrongs and injustices of the old. Reserved and self-contained as she had always been, she shared these feelings with one, and one only. It was her younger brother, Ted as they called him, to whom she confided her anticipations of retribution. It was upon this boy that she looked as the chosen instrument by which the family wrongs were one day to be righted. He was unmistakably very clever indeed, and his school career so far had been a series of unbroken successes. Whatever else happened, she was determined, even if she had to starve herself to do it, that his chances should not be interfered with. Perhaps in her anxiety for him she was less than just to the others. Jane, who was not clever, was taken from school to be a little drudge at home that Ted might be able to go among his companions without blushing for his clothes. To him she constantly talked of their enemy and his wickedness. She hunted out passages in the Bible that portrayed in vivid colours the requital of the transgressor. In these she gloried. The roll and ring of the words, seemed to fire her blood. And when the boy once asked her whether we ought not to forgive our enemies, she answered that punishment must come first. When they had been well punished, then would be the time to think about forgiveness. And when, unconvinced, he still urged his difficulties, she grew so angry even with him,

him, that he was glad to let his doubts and perplexities remain unresolved.

Soon after Mrs. Crofts' death the Medletts made a great effort to be reconciled. Nora happened to be working at the window one afternoon, when she saw a smart-looking fly drive up to the door, and Mrs. Medlett got out, leaving some children inside. She rang the bell, but before the little maid-of-all-work had mounted half the kitchen stairs, Nora herself, a dangerous light in her eyes, had opened the door and stood waiting for her visitor to speak, making no sign of recognition, meeting her rather nervous approaches with an icy stare.

"Oh, Nora, my dear, we were so sorry to hear——" she began, as she mounted the top step and held out her hand.

And Nora, looking full at her, very deliberately shut the hall door in her face.

Thenceforth for many a day the two families pursued their separate paths, holding no intercourse with each other, the one steadily climbing upwards, the other just as steadily slipping down.

One night, about six months later, John Crofts came home very drunk, and—a rather unusual thing for him—in a very bad temper. Next morning, instead of going out at his usual time, he loafed about doing nothing, evidently in a state of severe depression. The day after, he told Nora that what she had dreaded for a long time had at last taken place—he had been dismissed from his post as manager of his department. She urged him to go at once to see his principals with a view to reinstatement, but the decisiveness of his refusal suggested to her at once that the occasion of his dismissal must have been very serious indeed, or—and this seemed more probable—that it was the last of a long series.

It would be wearisome and profitless to trace the steps by
which

which the family's fortunes declined as its head lost situation after situation, sinking gradually from the managership of a large department to the desk of a clerk at thirty shillings a week. Before this was reached, the house had of necessity been given up. They had gone into lodgings, and within four years from the winding-up of the Limpan Motor, Limited, those lodgings were on the top floor of a shabby-genteel lodging-house in a street off the Edgware Road.

For the full thirty shillings never reached Nora's hands. Crofts had become a confirmed, though seldom a violent drinker. It was only by desperately hard work that she could manage to keep up the semblance of respectability. Jane did a great deal of the mending and cooking now, while Nora gave lessons in music and drawing, in both of which she was proficient after the manner of amateurs. As for Ted, his continued success formed the one break in the cloud. For the last year and a half he had kept himself at school by prizes and scholarships. He was now thirteen, and growing fast. Upon him Nora lavished all the affection for which her vengeful heart could find room. And when at Christmas he won an exhibition of fifteen pounds she rejoiced exceedingly, not so much perhaps for the success itself, but because among the beaten boys was Oscar Medlett, a big boy of fifteen.

From that time Nora had no doubt. Evidently Ted was to be the chosen instrument. She had long since given up all hopes of her father. When at night she brooded over the family wrongs, she set down as equally accomplished facts, the death of her mother, and the ruin of her father's character.

And ever as the days went by and the clouds gathered darker, religion became to her more and more a reality—an awful reality it is true, and yet one to which she clung with an ever-increasing intensity of purpose. She felt the universe to be incomplete without

out Someone at its centre to enforce with unsparing hand the sanctions of the moral law. The texts and phrases which speak of the wrath of God thrilled her heart with a feeling akin to joy. "*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.*" "*Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" These are types of the passages on which her soul, hungry and thirsty, loved to dwell.

She thought her cup of sorrow pretty full already; but what would she have said had she known that the bitterest drop was yet to come?

II

John Crofts had for some time been descending the ladder with accelerated speed. He was now rapidly approaching the bottom rung. His last piece of work—some copying—he had obtained by pestering the solicitor whom he had formerly instructed to act for him in the Limpan winding-up. By a similar process he had extracted a couple of shillings on account, and this he had expended at the nearest public-house. Consequently the work, when he brought it back the next morning, was not only three hours late, but so badly done, so full of mistakes and inaccuracies, he was paid the balance due to him and told very curtly it was no use applying for any more work there.

Half an hour afterwards he found himself in Fleet Street, "stony-hearted Fleet Street," without a penny in his pocket, and without the prospect of getting one, while within he felt an imperious demand for more liquor, that simply *must* be satisfied somehow. He knew it was no use going to Nora. It was, he was well aware, only with the greatest difficulty she could find the bare necessities of life, and he was by no means anxious to enter
into

into any conflict with her ; he had already learned to dread her plain speaking. To look for work and then wait for a week before getting any money, would be, he felt, quite intolerable. Slowly and carefully—for he had learned to love loafing—he reviewed every source from which he could raise money, and one by one he pronounced them all sealed. Then a sudden inspiration seized him. There was Medlett ! True, he had ruined him—curse him ! but wasn't that all the more reason for getting every farthing he could, out of him ? Another thing struck him. On two or three occasions he had received five-pound notes enclosed in a blank sheet of paper, directed in a boy's hand. He had wondered whether they could have come from his former friend ; now he felt sure of it, and at the thought of his wasted opportunities he could have wept. Drink, which had killed his self-respect, had at least scotched his yearning for revenge. In the light of those five-pound notes and of future possibilities, he began to reconsider his judgment. Perhaps Medlett was not so much to blame after all. Anyway, it was foolish keeping up that sort of feud for ever. It was absurd to talk about it as Nora did. That was just the difference between a man of sense, a man of the world, and a silly hot-headed girl. Medlett must have a rare lot in him ; there could be no doubt of that. He was junior partner now in his firm and rolling in money, simply rolling in money. What a lovely house he had, and as for hansoms, of course he never went about in anything else. And to think that for years they kept side by side as it were, rising step by step together. If it hadn't been for that stupid quarrel he should have been just where Medlett was now.

The result of these cogitations was that he went home, and to his great joy found his eldest daughter out. He made an excuse to get rid of Jane, and going into Nora's room took from her desk
a sheet

a sheet of paper, an envelope, and a stamp. Then he sat down and composed a long letter to his former friend.

It was not an easy letter to write, but he was thirsty ; and before long the deed was done. He pictured his destitution in terms which were not ill-chosen, admitted that he had felt bitterly against his friend, but added that time and the memories of the past had softened his resentment, or he could never have brought himself to ask for help. He besought his friend to procure him work if he possibly could, and at the promptings of the aforesaid thirst, introduced a postscript.

“A small loan for pressing necessities would be very acceptable.—J. C.”

Medlett received the letter the same evening, and carried it off to his little smoking-room to digest with his dinner. He was shrewd enough to read between the lines, knowing, as he did, a good deal, and guessing more of Crofts' present condition. As he looked round the cosy room, self-complacency began to don the garb of kindness. The world had indeed gone well with him. A quite remarkable success had attended his speculations. It really seemed, he said to himself, reverentially, as if Providence were bent on rewarding his industrious and persevering youth. And this poor devil had gone utterly to the wall—no doubt there was a good reason for it somewhere ; Providence knew how to discriminate between the wheat and the chaff. Still, there he was, practically penniless.

“It's no good finding him work, but I'll send him another fiver,” was his conclusion ; for Crofts had been quite right in his surmise : the previous notes *had* come from Hampstead. Crofts, it need hardly be said, was delighted with the result of his application, and spent a full week in the public-house looking for work, returning home at night with
more

more and more of the Devil's hall-mark upon his flabby, sodden face.

At the end of the week he managed to find some more copying work, which brought in a few shillings. He never thought, now, of taking anything home; but he was forced to spend a few shillings on boots. The rest went, of course, to, or rather towards, satisfying his thirst. Then he found himself once more in the picturesque but uncomfortable condition of the empty-pocketed. The idea of applying again to Medlett suggested itself, and he quickly went through the various stages of indignant refusal, calm consideration, enthusiastic adoption. Once more he paid a surreptitious visit to Nora's desk in her absence, and once more he renewed his application for work, and managed to introduce a statement to the effect that arrears of rent had swallowed up the greater part of the five-pound note, and how to provide the children with warm clothing for the winter he did not know. As he wrote this, he said to himself that if this appeal produced any substantial result, he would see that Ted had an overcoat and Jane some new boots.

The letter reached Medlett at a favourable moment. The fates were still propitious. He had followed his senior partner into a speculation from which they had escaped with the spoils of victory in the very nick of time, and his banking account was at least £350 to the good by that transaction.

"Poor devil! Again, so soon?" he murmured, and put his hand into his pocket, fingering the loose silver. Then the Limpian shares came into his mind.

"I ought to have told him; I wish I had," he thought, and put his hand into another pocket. He drew from his pocket-book a bank-note, slipped it into a sheet of paper, across which he wrote without any attempt to conceal his handwriting:

"You

"You must make this do. It is enough to give you a start. I cannot find you work."

When Crofts received the letter and found a ten-pound note enclosed, he shed copious tears of joy. And to prove to himself that he could keep his word, and was a most tender hearted father, he walked Ted straight off to a ready-made clothes shop, and to the boy's undisguised amazement, selected and paid for a warm winter overcoat at twenty-eight and sixpence. Such a coat as Ted had not worn since the days of adversity began.

Now Ted was a very sharp lad and unusually observant. When his father wanted to pay for the coat, he wondered where the money was coming from. He saw him take an envelope from his pocket, open it, unfold a sheet of paper, and produce a bank-note. As he handed the note to the shopman the envelope fluttered to the ground. Crofts had not noticed the fall. But Ted as he picked it up, noticed three things: the handwriting which was large and clear, the postmark which was Hampstead, and the engraved seal which was a large, antique M. M and Hampstead gave him a clue, and it occurred to him that perhaps the wicked Medlett of whose iniquities Nora was constantly talking, had been trying to make atonement. He had an instinctive feeling, however, that his father would be annoyed at his conjecture, and so handed back the envelope without a word. But the hasty snatch, the guilty look, the quick suspicious glance at him, all these confirmed in the boy's mind the truth of his surmise.

On their way back Crofts suddenly asked:

"Do you know of anything Nora wants badly?"

The boy's first inclination was to answer "food," but he checked it, and after a little consideration replied by mentioning a pair of gloves.

His

His father nodded and smiled. At the next draper's they stopped, and Crofts bought two pairs of the best ladies' gloves. It was nearly dark when they reached home, but Nora was standing by the window, trying to mend her one, shabby-genteel pair, and to economise lamp oil at the same time. Crofts went up to her, kissed her—a very unusual thing for him to do—and taking out the gloves put them in her hands. She uttered an exclamation of surprise and looked up with startled eyes. He smiled.

"Take them, my dear. You needn't look so scared. It's all right. Things seem to have taken a turn."

She opened the paper and stared mechanically at the gloves. Then she raised her eyes and saw Ted in the glory of his new coat.

"Oh, that is good," she exclaimed, "I have been wondering what he would do this winter for a coat."

"Don't you care for your gloves?" asked her father, in rather an injured tone.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "one must wear some when one goes out teaching, and these are mostly holes. But father, what has happened? Have the Limpans paid anything at last?"

Crofts was one of those who even under the pressure of trouble can only tell the truth when it is, as it were, fortified by a certain proportion of falsehood. And his conscience had the very convenient habit of crediting him with the truth, and ignoring the rest. He had often repeated to Nora the story of the Limpans' shares, and the villany of Medlett had lost nothing of picturesqueness in his telling. But he had never been able to tell her the absolute truth—that his law expenses had swallowed up all, and far more than all the paltry sum he received after the winding-up was carried through. Perhaps he may never have said so in so many words, but he had certainly succeeded in leaving on her
mind

mind the impression that there might still be something considerable recovered when everything had been settled, and he had even talked vaguely but largely of reconstruction. And though she had learned long since that his statements must be accepted with caution, yet this impression had somehow remained unshaken.

Her father shook his head.

"No. Don't talk of Limpans, I hate the name." Nora looked at him with a smile whose meaning he could not read.

"Never mind, father," she said. "A time will come. *Vengeance is mine. I will repay.*"

"Yes, my dear, certainly," answered Crofts weakly, feeling uncomfortably conscious of the scene that would ensue if Nora should find out in any way the source of this new wealth, "but we mustn't bear malice."

"Bear malice?" and her eyes seemed to blaze as she spoke the words. "It isn't a question of malice. He has ruined you, killed poor mother—yes," she went on with increasing excitement, "*killed* her, as surely as if he had strangled the life out of her with his own fingers, and brought us all to beggary. Bear malice, indeed! Why, to forgive or to forget such wrongs as these, would be to encourage wickedness."

"Well, well, well," exclaimed Crofts fretfully, half irritated, half cowed by her vehemence, "you needn't work yourself up into a passion, Nora. What is there for supper? Stale bread and Dutch cheese I suppose. I think I'll run out for a minute and see if I can get a bit of something."

But Nora knew what running out for a minute meant.

"Let Jane go," she said. "She hasn't been out all day, and she's a capital little shopper."

"No," he answered, "she'd be sure not to get what I want." Which was perfectly true.

He

He went out about nine, and came back half an hour after closing time quite drunk and very cheerful.

As he pulled himself up to the top flight of stairs, Nora opened the sitting-room door, a candle in her hand, and crossed the passage to the box-room in which she and Jane made shift to sleep.

He saw the light and looked up.

"Shay, Nora, hey! Do'n go bed yet. Wansh hav' li'l talk—Shtop, d'y—car! there's goo' girl—I'm all ri' tell you—Medlett sholly goo' f'ler—been drinkin' 'shealth."

The light disappeared. Fortunately perhaps for him, Nora had not caught the last sentence. But she had heard enough to fill her with a feeling only too nearly akin to loathing. She blew out the candle, for the moon was full, and artificial light was an extravagance. As she undressed, she looked round the miserable little room, and each squalid detail from the cracked, rickety glass to the torn and dirty window curtain, seemed to mock and exult over her. Inch by inch, in spite of all her efforts, they were sinking. Jane was growing up a simple drudge, and her hands were beginning to look like those of any little maid-of-all-work. There was Ted to be sure, and that thought generally brought back courage if not cheerfulness. But to-night her gloom was too deep for any dispersal. No matter how successful he might be, his success would come too late to save the rest of them. She could not go on like this for another twelvemonth, whatever happened. Then another thought, never far remote, leapt to the front—yes she could. One year, two years, ten years if need be, till the day of recompense. He, no doubt, was lying in his snug bed, sleeping the sleep of the just, surrounded by every luxury, heaping up riches month by month. Ah, she must pray. And then with clenched hands and eyes staring straight upwards, she poured forth a silent passion of imprecation so eager,

so vehement, that though no word was uttered, it seemed to choke her. She ended with "Our Father," which she repeated from old habit. The forgiveness clause presented no more difficulty to her than does the Sermon on the Mount to an army chaplain.

"If he had merely injured *me*, I daresay I could have forgiven easily enough," was the only explanation she vouchsafed her conscience, but it was quite sufficient.

A fortnight later Nora returned home one dull, foggy night, between nine and ten. It was her late evening, and she was fairly tired out. Her feet were damp, for the soles of her boots were in holes, and the long walk home—her pupil lived in Camden Town—had left her limp and cross. However, Jane had some hot tea ready, and though she felt too tired to eat the bread and butter which was ready cut for her, the mild stimulant refreshed her. She sent the child off to bed, and sat down to her nightly task of mending clothes. Ted was doing some extra work with a view to some new prize he was trying for. About eleven his yawns became so frequent that in spite of his protests she insisted on his going to bed. Then for some time she was left alone to her mending and her thoughts. These were as usual of a sombre description. The gleam of brightness which had come with the last accession of wealth had vanished. Indeed the mysterious air assumed by Crofts when she pressed him as to his source, had occasioned her fresh uneasiness. Her faith in her father was so grievously shaken that his honesty did not seem to her quite above suspicion. But she never forgot where to lay the ultimate burden of blame. "It is all his doing," she murmured. "How long, oh Lord, how long?"

She was surprised to hear the hall door open. It must be her father she knew, every one else was in, but for the last week he had

had been drinking, and seldom came home before midnight. She was still more astonished to hear the sound of conversation, faint at first, but growing louder as the talkers mounted the rickety stairs. One voice she soon recognised—that of her father, evidently half intoxicated. The other voice sounded familiar, yet she could not say to whom it belonged. Every time she heard it she seemed to be on the brink of recognition, but when it ceased she found it had eluded her. The staircase was a long one, with a rather sharp turn about half-way between the floors. She could not imagine who her father's companion could be. For one moment the idea that it was a policeman crossed her mind, but she instantly rejected it; her father's voice, though she could not distinguish the words, sounded perfectly placid. Then it struck her that he was probably bringing one of his public-house acquaintances home with him. He had never done such a thing before, but the unforeseen had happened so often in her experience, she felt as though nothing could surprise her greatly. Meanwhile the steps were mounting, but very slowly, the narrow, creaking stairs. She knew the landing was quite dark, for the floor underneath was unoccupied, and she felt no inclination to show a light. And now as the footsteps turned the angle of the staircase, she could distinguish what was said. Her father's articulation was subject to what he himself sometimes alluded to as "a slight affection." The stranger spoke, and again she racked her memory to link that voice with its appropriate name.

"That'll do—I won't come any further. I'm quite satisfied. I will send to you to-morrow."

Then she heard her father speaking in a manner laboriously slow and portentously solemn.

"Berrer come up now you'r 'ere. You shtand there. I'll go ge' light."

Then

Then silence, followed by the sound of an unsteady step, and the creaking of the crazy baluster as if some one were clinging to, or leaning heavily on it. And then after a moment's pause there came a strange shuffling sound succeeded by a noise—half-sob, half-scream—and that followed by a horrid thud, thud, thud, the sound of something heavy falling down stairs.

Nora sprang to her feet, took the candle from the table, and threw the door wide open. As she did so she heard the other voice exclaim in a horror-stricken tone :

"Good God, Crofts ! what have you done ? Are you much hurt ?"

The draught from the quickly opened door extinguished her candle, but before it went out she saw for one short moment the face of the stranger. It was Medlett—the enemy of the family.

The shock of the discovery drove the thought of her father out of her mind for the minute. The one idea that seemed to dominate every other was this—that the very man upon whose head she had for years been invoking the wrath of heaven had, in some mysterious way which as yet she could not divine, been delivered into her hands.

It was his voice that broke the spell.

"For God's sake, Nora, get a light ; your father has tumbled down those cursed stairs and hurt himself. Hark how he groans."

The door of the third room opened and Ted appeared in his night-shirt, a candle in his hand. He had been reading over his lessons in bed.

As the flickering light revealed Medlett's face all white and drawn, her tongue was loosed :

"You killed my mother, and now you have murdered my father," she said in a strong, harsh voice.

Medlett

Medlett had not sufficient imagination to be susceptible to dramatic effects.

"Don't talk rubbish," he said, roughly. "Here, you boy, bring that candle."

Ted obeyed, and at the same moment Mrs. Rouch, the landlady, in a very ancient, pink flannel dressing-gown, hastily tied round the waist with a piece of sash-line, came puffing upstairs, a kerosene lamp in her hand.

"Dear, dear," she panted. "Whatever 'as 'appened? Oh, the turn it give me, to be sure. I thought it was the chimbley gone. Oh, bless 'is 'eart, poor man, 'is 'ead must 'ave caught the edge of one of the stairs; they're beastly sharp at the sides. Look, 'e's all smothered in blood. Oh, Mr. Worrall," she added, as the first-floor lodger appeared in his shirt sleeves, "just bring a nip o' brandy; there's a good soul."

"All right, mum," replied Mr. Worrall, who was a railway porter, and had an ambulance certificate. "Let's look at 'im fust. Alcol's the very wust thing in many cases."

He spoke very slowly, in a deep bass, and Mrs. Rouch was silenced. And as he stooped and straightened out the huddled figure, and then gently felt for the wound, they all gathered round, awe-struck, speechless.

"There's a 'ole, sure enough," he at last pronounced, "and a fracture I should say, but whether comminooted or not I can't tell. It'll be a 'orspital case, mum. I'd better get a policeman to bring the ambulance round."

"No, no," exclaimed Medlett. "Get a cab and take him to the nearest hospital at once—St. Mary's, I suppose."

"What I want to know is 'ow did all this 'appen?" suddenly interjected a sharp, thin voice. It was Mr. Rouch who appeared on the scene, fully dressed, having stayed behind to complete his toilet.

Nora stepped forward and pointed to Medlett.

"That man pushed him down stairs. He ruined us years ago. I suppose he came to gloat over his work. I heard them quarrelling on the stairs."

She spoke in short, jerky sentences. Her words seemed to choke her. Her father would die, she had no doubt of that, but he should not die alone or unavenged. And as she stood there, "white as chalk and 'er eyes all a blazin'"—so Mrs. Rouch subsequently described her appearance—the intensity of her passion powerfully impressed her audience. Even Medlett, to whom the possibility of such a charge had never occurred, felt a sudden chill of fear as he realised the position in which he might find himself. He showed, however, no sign of this, when he answered, addressing Mr. and Mrs. Rouch :

"It is true I used to know him years ago, and lately he has come begging over and over again. I helped him time after time. To-night I happened to meet him. There was a block near the Marble Arch, and my cab had to stop. He saw me, got on the step, and asked me to lend him a couple of sovereigns to get a sewing-machine for his girl——"

"Liar !" interjected Nora, going, if possible, a shade whiter.

"I saw," continued Medlett, taking no notice of the interruption, "that he was half intoxicated, and it suddenly struck me that he might be imposing on me by his tales of poverty, and at the same time he did not seem in a state to find his way home safely, so I told him I would give him the money he wanted, and perhaps more, if he would take me home with him. He got in. When we reached this house the lights were out. He had no matches. I had only two, and these went out in the passage. We had to feel our way upstairs, and he, in his condition, kept lurching and slipping about. Before we got to
the

the top landing, I told him I was satisfied and would send him what he wanted. He wouldn't hear of my going, and asked me to wait while he went up alone and got a light. A minute after I heard a lurch and a sort of scream. Then his body came bumping down, and nearly knocked me over."

Nora stamped her foot with rage, for she saw that the mention of "my cab" and the sovereigns had produced a marked effect.

"Isn't it enough," she cried, "to have killed our mother and murdered our father, but you must slander him before the breath is out of his body. As though he would have touched a penny of your miserable money. He would have died sooner. He hated you almost as much as I do. 'Slip,' indeed, when I heard you say, '*Good God! what have I done?*'"

"That looks bad if it's true," said Mr. Rouch, in an audible aside to his wife.

"I'll swear I never said anything of the kind," cried Medlett, who had entirely forgotten what he had said.

Ted, who had set down his candle and gone over to where his father lay, with a roughly extemporised pad under the wound, looked up quickly, and was upon the point of speaking, when he caught sight of Nora's eyes fixed on him with a peculiarly stern and forbidding expression. And the moment she saw she had arrested his attention, she made a hurried, imperious gesture, which he rightly interpreted as a command to hold his tongue.

So for a few minutes they kept their watch in silence. The injured man seemed to labour more and more in his breathing, and his face grew, or seemed to grow, more dreadfully livid. At last the street-door opened, and Mr. Worrall appeared, followed by a policeman and an exceedingly well-groomed man, whom both Mr. Worrall and the policeman treated with marked respect.

The doctor—for such he was—knelt down at once by the patient's

patient's side and commenced his examination. He felt his pulse, pulled open his eyes, held a light to the pupils, and then felt with his fingers for the wound in the back of the head. Then he looked up.

"Better take him to the hospital at once. It's just possible he may become conscious before—before the end. You have the ambulance there?"

The policeman nodded. "The other man's got it downstairs."

"Is there no hope?" asked Nora, in a low, husky voice. Her mouth and throat were parched, as if burned with fever.

The doctor shook his head gravely, but gave no verbal answer.

"Then I charge that man with the murder," she cried, pointing to Medlett, her concentrated passion seeming suddenly to liberate her voice, which rang out clear and strong.

"Can't do that, mum, while the party's alive," said C 68, the suspicion of a smile hovering over his expressionless countenance. "You can make any statement you like at the inquest, you know," he added, soothingly.

She made no further remark, and Medlett, after giving his name and address, and requesting the doctor, on his behalf, to superintend the removal to the hospital, drove home in a cab.

Nora accompanied the little party, and waited till she heard the doctor's verdict, that there was no immediate danger, that in all probability there would be no marked change for several hours; recovery was absolutely hopeless.

It was striking one when she got back. She had the key with her, and let herself in quietly. The reaction from the intense excitement of the last hour or two was upon her; for the first time, perhaps, in the course of years, she felt a craving for sympathy. It would have been a comfort to have had even Mrs. Rouch to talk to; anything was better than this cold, black solitariness.

solitariness. But the distant sound of muffled snoring was the only sound that fell upon her as she carefully felt her way upstairs. Would there be a light up there, she wondered. She shuddered at the thought of the dark, silent rooms, and she stopped, pressing her hands upon her forehead, trying to remember where she had put the matches. But as she turned the fatal angle in the staircase, she saw with joy the sitting-room door slightly open, and within the glow of light. Still walking warily, for fear of waking Jane, who had slept undisturbed through all the commotion, she nevertheless quickened her steps, and pushed open the door with a sigh of relief. To many people the close, untidy, ill-furnished room would have looked cheerless enough ; but compared with what she had pictured and expected, it was delightful. There was a little fire in the grate, and a kettle on the hob. Two candles stood on the table, and half a loaf and a piece of butter, accompanied the teapot and cup that were set opposite her usual chair. On another chair drawn up to the table, asleep, his head resting on his outstretched arms, sat Ted. As she saw him and noted the preparations for her return, her eyes filled with unwonted tears, and with a sudden impulse she stooped and kissed his forehead very gently.

Gentle as the touch was it woke him. He looked up for a moment half dazed, then came to himself with a start.

"Oh, Nor, is that you? I was dreaming about the old house. I thought I was a little chap in bed and mother came up to kiss me good-night."

She smiled on him, but laid her fingers on her lips and softly closed the door.

"What do they say at the hospital?" asked the boy.

The question recalled her from her melting mood. The lines round her mouth seemed to harden, as she answered quietly :

"They

"They say there is no hope. He may live a day or two, and may possibly be conscious. We must go the first thing in the morning."

The boy looked down and his lip quivered. Partly to make a diversion she asked :

"Did you get all this ready for me, Ted?"

"Yes," he answered; "I had to borrow the butter and the coals from Mrs. Rouch; I couldn't find any in the cupboard."

"It was very good of you, dear," she said, fetching another cup and filling one for him and one for herself.

They drank their tea in silence, and to please him she tried to eat a piece of bread and butter. The tea, the light, the fire, the simple sitting still, all seemed to refresh her; but deeper and most comforting of all was the sense of human love and sympathy that for the moment drove out the dogs of hate, and gave her peace as well as rest.

Not for long though. The boy fidgeted about, and after several false starts, suddenly said :

"Nor, I'm sure you are wrong about Mr. Medlett."

"What do you mean?" she asked quietly enough, but every nerve tense in a moment, and the dogs out on the trail again.

"I was awake, reading in bed, and I heard them come up. They weren't quarrelling at all; and what Mr. Medlett said was : 'Good God, Crofts! what have *you* done?' I heard it quite distinctly."

The dogs were in full cry now, but the fear that she might be balked of her vengeance just as the opportunity seemed to have so wonderfully arisen, made her calm and wary.

"Look here, Ted," she answered, "you may be right about that, or I may—I don't know which is. But one thing is absolutely clear; that man—don't call him 'Mister'—ruined us.

Mother

Mother never got over it, it was that killed her ; and, as for poor father, you know it lost him his work and drove him to drink. If this fall were a pure accident, Medlett would be his murderer just as much, only he would get off scot-free—and that he shan't."

And she shut her lips tightly.

Ted sat thinking, and a pink flush mounted to his cheek. Nora herself, with all her faith in his cleverness, had no idea how he would carry himself in such a crisis. Like most strong-willed persons she had great confidence in her own ability to bear down opposition ; the only question in her mind was how long the process would take.

After a pause the lad began again.

"Of course you can say what you think you heard ; but they will be sure to ask me. And I shall have to speak the truth."

"And let the man who killed your father and mother escape ? Oh, for shame, Ted. Why savages have more feeling than that."

"Savages know it is wrong to lie," answered the boy slowly, but with a hint of doggedness in his tone that irritated his sister intensely. She began to feel with dismay her helplessness in face of this new and unexpected obstacle.

They were both overwrought, and it was a toss-up which temper would break down the sooner.

Nora made one more effort.

"Ted, I am older than you, a good deal ; you have obeyed me for years in little things ; now that I ask you to obey me in a big thing, I am sure you won't refuse and break my heart. If that wretch escapes, I shall lie down and die."

There was another pause, a long one this time. She leaned back and watched his face with devouring eagerness. If this appeal failed she had no resource, no hope.

It

It seemed to her an interminable time before he spoke. He was rather incoherent but quite resolved.

"It's no use, Nor, I can't tell a lie like that to get a man hanged when I don't believe he's done it. I'm sure it was right what he said—that he had been sending father money for ever so long. It was his money bought my coat and your gloves."

She saw she was beaten, and the tension of the strain she had been putting on herself was too great for her self-control. She abandoned herself to a storm of passion, hysterical in its violence. One sign of restraint she still showed—she made no loud noise. She showered on the boy every adjective of reproach and contempt her not particularly abundant vocabulary supplied—mean-spirited, ungrateful, cruel, cowardly, stupid, these were some of the epithets which preceded what sounded like a half-finished curse.

Half-finished, for before she could complete her sentence, the boy jumped to his feet, his cheeks crimson, his eyes sparkling, his breast heaving with passion.

"*Cowardly, mean, cruel, ungrateful*, am I?" he cried, "and what are you? You who would swear away a man's life. Yes, I know you heard the same as I did. You daren't look me in the face and say you didn't. Why, you're no better than a murderess yourself. You are no sister of mine; there, I'd sooner die than go on living with you."

And he rushed out of the room, slamming the door after him.

The sight of his fury and the sound of the door sobered her. She sat up and listened for any sign of movement in the house. She heard Ted go into his own room; then there was silence. Jane even if she had been awakened was evidently not alarmed.

Relieved as to this, she lay back and began to think. Once more she lay as if waterlogged in the trough of a storm. She felt very, very tired; the future seemed utterly blank of hope, and yet she

she must think, think, think. Her head was aching with a dull, persistent pain that seemed part of the universal misery that surrounded her life. She kept losing the thread of thought, beginning with the events of the night, then wondering what she was thinking about, and having painfully and laboriously to go over the ground again. At last with infinite pains she fixed her attention on Medlett, and slowly, clinging to him as the central figure, reconstructed the whole story. Then she remembered what the boy had said about his sending money. Had her father really stooped to beg from their enemy? It seemed impossible, and yet—now she came to think of it there were several things that occurred to her, and made her shudder lest it should indeed prove to have been so. As she looked round the room, her eyes rested on a coat that hung against the wall. It was the jacket Crofts used to sit in while at home. She got up and walked across the room, for a sudden idea had struck her. She put her hand into the breast pocket and took out half a dozen letters and papers. She opened the first, it was an answer to an application for work. The second gave her the information she was seeking. The envelope had the monogram M on the flap, and the sheet of paper inside was headed with the Medletts' address at Hampstead. On it was written the following brief message :

"You have had £30 in less than three months. I cannot send more at present.—W. M."

It was all true then. Medlett's money had been helping them to live. The thought was almost intolerable. She went to the work-basket and took out two pairs of gloves. With the aid of the scissors she cut them into shreds, and threw them into the fire. This done she once more sat down in the chair and took up the burden of her thoughts. She had made revenge—justice she called it to herself—the goal of her life, but how it was to be reached

reached she had never been able to divine. And now when quite suddenly the opportunity presented itself, only one obstacle stood in the way. The boy for whom she had worked and sacrificed and half-starved herself, of whom she had grown so proud and of late so fond, in whom she had seen the chosen instrument of vengeance, this boy was the fatal hindrance that had ruined her plans and blighted the one strong hope of her life. She knew nothing of the irony of fate as the old Greeks conceived of it, but she felt as if she had been made the sport and jest of an unseen power against whom it was useless to fight.

And as she realised the fact that the last five years of her life, with all its pains and humiliation and heartburnings, had been simply thrown away in utter futility, another thought pierced her with poignant pain. One element in her daily life had sweetened and made it tolerable. It was the affection of her favourite brother. And now that had gone too, gone irretrievably, the last, and perhaps the most futile sacrifice on the altar of revenge. She remembered his thoughtfulness for her this very evening. It had been like healing to her bruised and angry spirit. It had called up, or called back for a few blessed moments another and a better Nora. And now he hated her—would have nothing more to do with her, would not call her sister, called her murderess instead. And she had cursed him, the boy whom she now discovered she loved with a love stronger even than her hate.

Ill-nourished, overworked, her nerves shattered by this night's experiences, the thought of all her misery fairly overcame her. She threw herself on the floor and broke out into hysterical sobs, biting her lips hard to prevent their being audible, and in a last attempt to keep some vestige of self-control. Her loneliness appalled and crushed her. She had sacrificed Jane and the other boys to Ted that through him she might taste revenge. She had
never

never gained their love, and his she had won only to fling it away again. And so at last, after all these years, it dawned upon her too late that she was the victim not of blind fate or of malignant powers and principalities, but of her own hard heart and stubborn will. It was she herself who with cruel and relentless hand had exacted from her own starved and prisoned soul the very uttermost farthing.

III

"Oh! dear Nor, what is the matter? Do wake up. You frightened me so dreadfully."

She had fallen asleep, utterly worn out; and woke to find herself still on the floor, with Ted kneeling by her side, in his shirt sleeves, his face stained with tears.

"Please forgive me, Nor. I didn't know what I was saying. I think I must have been mad. Please don't make me do *that*. Any other way I will help you to get your revenge."

She raised her head from his coat which he had slipped under her as a pillow. As she saw his anxious expression and the signs of recent tears, as she heard the tone of his voice, the lines of her face relaxed into a smile almost like that of a happy child. She had been living for years among people whose language was more forcible than polite. She was still under the influence of strong excitement. The joy of finding again that which was lost overcame her. Let one or all of these mitigating circumstances excuse her manner of speech as she sprang to her feet and kissed him on the lips:

"Damn revenge! It's love I want."

Bodley Heads

No 5 : Portrait of Mr. G. S. Street

By Francis Howard



The Secret

By T. Mackenzie

YES, you would have me know that it is within the little casket held level below your tiny, pointed chin, but you forget I can look into your solemn, omniscient eyes, and read that the secret lies within them too. Never was mystery more safe than in your keeping, you weird little creature, with eyes of a Sphinx and mouth of a baby. Was your secret known to the artist who painted you, to him who gave you that thrilling look, over-teeming with what you can never tell? Where two persons know, there concealment is weak, so I am assured that neither the painter who conceived you, nor I who am in love with you, can share the knowledge you were created to hide. You are so sure of it that you look me through and through, guiltless of having any treasure which no one may share. "Why need I fear you?" I read in your eyes, "I hold what you can never know. I am Mystery, and exist only so long as no one has my Secret."

Little positive negation ! Like to-morrow, which never is but always to be with us, you offer perpetually what you will never grant. Do you know that you tempt me well-nigh beyond endurance with that wistful, eldritch beauty, and, madman that I become, I would that you were a living thing that I might kill
you,

you, and so annihilate the rigid negation of your obstinate self-control. Have you no compassion for us poor humanity, with our infinite capacity for needing, that you should sur-taunt us with that inexorable look of denial? You glory in your power, there is satisfaction about your lips, and you hold the casket lightly to show that it is hopelessly beyond our reach. Indeed, it seems to me at times, that you are offering the little bronze treasure to the world at large, saying :

“Here, take my Secret !” knowing that you but invite in order to refuse.

I wonder did you ever live on earth? Sometimes you seem to me to be a worldly little person, made to drive a man distracted for the want of you. It gives you more satisfaction to say No than Yes ; your baby mouth may be willing and weak, yet your eyes are always stern, and see too far to care for what is near. Who once gained your soul, however, would gain it for all eternity. Steadfast is the watchword of that soul, union of purpose, oneness of design, truth absolute are its attributes.

I like to sit here beside you, while the dim light of London day suggests the neutral hue of dusky hair that might be brown and shadowed eyes that might be blue, and fancy that once you were a living girl, an artist's model, and, had you lived, might still be in the fulness of sweet womanhood.

I am sure that you are dead. I like to fancy that you fulfilled one duty to the artist and that then you died. Life could not have wanted you longer, having made you what the picture on my wall reflects. For all trivial purpose in the world, surely of all maids you were most unfit. When I think of you as leading the life of any girl whom fate has brought near my path, I cannot but smile at the incongruity of the notion. That you lived is, I grant, a fair thought, but that you should be and act as
other

other women is an absurd one. Who ever possessed a personality like yours that you should be expected to resemble another? I would as lief imagine that I had two mothers, that two moons ruled the sea's tide, as fancy that any one like you in being and in face ever set foot upon this stony world of stumbling. The very sweep of your hair falling parted round your face is unique, the colour of your eyes, neither blue nor green nor grey is unparalleled. Who else had hands like those upholding the casket, unless perhaps it were he, whose stroke upon the lyre made the mountain tops to bow in adoration?

All around you is dark, mystic, suggestive; the delicate tenderness of your face against the gloomy canvas is like the petal of a wild rose adrift upon a murky stream, white and pink and leaf-shaped.

* * * * *

There are those to whom Mystery is a thing of horror. The unseen offers suggestions so unthinkable that the mind turns drowning to what is comprehensible. To such as these my picture will never be a thing of joy. It offers nothing that the mind of man can fathom, and the thoughts it awakens bear no name.

Some there are, and I am of this category, to whom pure happiness is only possible when all that pertains to the intellect of man is in abeyance, and the unreasoning, unstudied, uncalculating part of him is in the ascendant, jubilant in the recklessness of nature—divinely the brute. Ascetism may recoil at the words, philosophy be shocked, nevertheless our most glorious passions are those which are instinctive. Motherhood, Heroism, Love, do they spring from the intellect? Irrational, if you will so name them, these instinctive, animal feelings have not lowered mankind;

kind ; contrariwise, they have prompted him to Godlike action when reason would have made him coward.

We may revel in our science, classify and label our emotions, we can never argue away the beauty of what passes the understanding, and to say that Mystery is an abomination is to despise God and Life and Love and Hope.

With dismay I think on the dissatisfaction inevitably linked with the solving of what was unknown, that bitter taste underlying so much that is rapturous on earth, and I look up at my maiden with her Secret, and know that the greatest wisdom in the world is hers.

A Chef-d'Œuvre

By Reginald Turner

As I, his literary executor, arrange and destroy his papers, I realise at last and to the full the tragedy of Alan Herbert's life. If ever man lived for his art, he did ; all that he had, of health and strength, of means and leisure, he gave to what he believed that art demanded of him. And art was no cant word to him. By talking of it he dazzled no clique, he became no lion of tea parties, he gained no undeserved renown. Sincerity, in all the plainness of that austere word, guided his actions and his thoughts. He possessed all the prejudices which so many of his kind affect, and for those prejudices he was ready to suffer. I have known him ill for a week from the hand-shake of a professional journalist, though several of his intimate friends were occasional contributors to the evening papers. Having known him all my life, I never took him quite seriously. At school and at home I had never detected anything abnormal in him, but, as boyhood is not critical of character, this is not surprising ; and I must confess that his parents, pastors and masters, who were all grown-up, thought him unremarkable. I never *thought* about him till my third year at Oxford. He was in his second year, and though I had seen him frequently while he was yet a freshman, I had never had cause to separate him, in my mind, from any of the other men I

knew. The first time he surprised me was one day in the beginning of the October term. I had come up from the river after trying some of the freshmen for the boats, and I looked in at his rooms on my way to my own "Diggs." At that time, Alan was a very good-looking fellow of twenty-one, and as I saw him in his chair with a book in his hand, it struck me for the first time that he had a student's face. After a few moments' conversation, I happened to ask him what he was going to read for his final schools; he seemed to me like a man who would read history, not being scholar enough for "greats," nor plodding enough for a pass. "I think," he answered, "that I shall not take my degree. Reading for a school narrows one." I had heard idle or stupid men say that before, and I told him that being at the 'Varsity one might as well do something and read with some object in view. As I said it his face lit up, and he answered:

"Do something? I intend to! I *am* reading with an object in view. A month ago I had no object. I intended to get a decent class and then go down and see what life I should drift into. But to-day my whole life is changed. You have heard of religious conversions. There are other kinds. I have been converted, I have found salvation, and I intend to live—don't laugh at me!—for Art. I am not going to shrink from any of the hardships which such a decision brings with it. I take myself seriously, I believe in myself, because I know that concentration and determination always give a man his heart's desire. Look at this book, it is the life of Balzac, perhaps the greatest literary character of all time, if we consider his circumstances and his influence. In this book I have found my salvation. Before I die I will produce a work which shall be abiding, which shall be my *raison d'être*, and by which I shall gain the true immortality. I am feverish now, the heat of conversion is upon me,

me, but I believe I have strength enough of purpose to persevere, for long years, for a lifetime, till at last I conquer. I know I seem to you now to be a prig, but I am not a prig. I am sincere ! ”

I saw indeed that he was in earnest, and I confess I was surprised and touched. “ Are you going to write a *magnum opus* ? ” I asked, without any attempt at a sneer, but half in fun.

“ The quantity of my work I cannot yet decide, its form I cannot yet tell, but neither concerns me very much. The smallest stars are those which shine the brightest.”

“ It is perhaps because they are the furthest off that they look small,” I murmured.

“ I know,” he went on, without noticing my interruption, “ that most men who have done great things in quality have also produced a large amount of work, but that is perhaps an accident, certainly not a necessity, and I shall do nothing in a hurry. Balzac produced for ten years work which was but a preparation, which might have been destroyed without loss to the world and with profit to himself. I shall prepare myself, but I shall not produce till I feel within myself that the time has come, when I can give to the world my heart’s desire.”

“ My dear Alan, you won’t find Oxford a very sympathetic place,” I said, a little impatiently.

“ No, I quite think that, and I shall not stay, when I have exhausted all it can give me for my purpose. I shall travel and I shall live alone ; fortunately I shall be able to live my own life. But as yet I am in confusion, I have formed no plans either for studying the works of others, or for forming my own, but I *am* in earnest, and that’s the great thing, surely.”

That night we dined together, and I found him so *distrain* a companion

companion that I vowed to see little of my enthusiast till his mania had worn off. For weeks I saw nothing of him, and one day, towards the end of term I was surprised to hear that he had been "sent down." He had been out all night and could give no better explanation than that he had gone out, and, forgetting rules and time, had walked all through the night, till, at six o'clock in the morning, he had astonished the porter by demanding admittance at the lodge. Of course neither Don nor Undergraduate would believe such a story, and so he was told that he would be rusticated for a year. I went to see him before he departed. When I got to his rooms, he was packing his books, and as I was trying to say something by way of sympathy, he shrugged his shoulders and told me that it was the first sacrifice his purpose demanded of him, and he didn't regret it. His people at home would not understand him, but he should hope for as little unpleasantness as his father's time with the birds (it was November) would allow him. And, after all, he said the 'Varsity was never kind to dreamers.—"Look at Shelley!"

Two years passed before I saw Alan again. During the year of his rustication, we heard he was abroad, and I received an occasional letter from him, sometimes from Spain and sometimes from Italy. When the year was nearly over I got a long letter from him. He told me that he could never come back to Oxford, with its rigid rules and narrow ambitions.

"I am going to-morrow," so his letter, dated from Paris, ran, "to Croisset, there perhaps to feel the spirit of the great Master steal over me. In the little rooms which I have taken I shall study and ponder over that great life which devoted itself to absolute perfection, and then when I feel I am sufficiently imbued with the perfect spirit of the scholar and the artist, I shall come to London and live quietly in my studio. How much nicer that
word

word 'studio' sounds than 'study.' The one conjures up all beautiful, studious, and working things, the other merely conveys the impression of vain learning and formless severity!"

The letter was long, but I won't quote more. I have here before me, as I write, my answer to that letter, and I confess I feel rather ashamed of it. For six months Alan stayed at Croisset, going occasionally to Rouen to chat with the booksellers and study life on the quay, very much after the manner of Flaubert, I suppose. Then he suddenly left for Italy again. I fancy a reading party drove him away from Croisset. At last one of my uncles told me he had seen him in London. His mother sent me his address. She seemed rather distressed about him, and begged that I would try and get him to take some interest in life. I wrote to him and he wrote back asking me to dine with him. He was living in some rooms in an old house off the Strand, and when I entered I noticed that his sitting-room was almost bare of furniture. The walls were covered with long strips of paper, on which were written what looked like genealogies. I was quite shocked when I saw my friend. In place of his former vigorous bearing, I found him thin, pale, and care-worn, and he certainly had not been cheating himself by pretending to work, for his face was that of one who studied by day and by night. As I looked around me, I saw two or three chairs, a bare writing table, and on the floor a heap of books in utter confusion.

"I thought we would dine at a restaurant," he exclaimed, evidently thinking I was looking for some signs of an impending meal. "We shall be more free to talk over old times. This room is my studio, and while here I cannot take my thoughts from my work. I'm afraid you'll find me a bore and an egoist, but living alone for two years with but one object in view doesn't improve one as a companion."

We went out to dine, and I found that Alan had indeed not improved as a companion. We talked of old times and friends, and he told me something of where he had been and what he had done since we last met. But our conversation soon flagged, and I was rather glad when he suggested that we should take our coffee in his rooms. When we got back, I saw that he flung himself into his chair with infinite content, and when our pipes were lighted and the coffee—excellent coffee by the way—was brought in, I began to feel quite cheerful. "And now, Alan," I said, between sips of coffee and whiffs at my pipe, "now that you are back in London, you must neglect your friends no longer, and we shall expect you to marry."

He laughed. "My friends are here on the wall, and as for my heart, I have given that away. An artist's life is a lonely one, he has some hardships to endure, but he has compensations also. I should have liked to marry and to have had sons and daughters to carry me on into the future, but I intend to live in the heart and memory of every one that knows what beauty in Art is. I have certainly given my life and my soul to the service of Art. Since that day in Oxford when I told you my ambition, I have never faltered; all my actions have been taken for one object and though the way has often seemed hard, I have never regretted it, for I knew I was paying the penalty of my choice. I remember that day you asked me what form my work would take. I couldn't tell you then, but to-day I can. The preparation is over, the work begun. Will you smile when I tell you how I have chosen to live? Please don't; it means so much to me. I may in the future write much, or little, I care not which, but I am going to stand or fall, to stand I know it will be, by what in English must be called the 'short story.'"

"Yes," I said, rather vacantly, "the short story's the thing."

"Why!

"Why! I have always loved small gems rather than large ones. They can be judged, comprehended, embraced, more completely. Fiction involves creation. The characters are mine; I invented them, made them live, and they shall never die. Who was Hamlet? What woman gave him birth? What vault holds his body? Yet he is more real than any general, whose name is written large on bloody battlefields, or any king buried beneath a pyramid. Shall I produce a Hamlet? No; for I wish my work to be not a monument but a cathedral. A perfect orchestra is more beautiful than the most exquisite achievement of one single instrument. Nor shall my puppets be mere creatures of the imagination. As I conceived them, so have I traced their history. You see those genealogies on the wall? They are the ancestors of the persons in my story. I will have justification for every word they utter, reason for every step they take—reason and justification to myself. The world who reads my story shall not know, but I, the author will know, and knowing will convince. There is a waiter in my story, a Marseillais, he does but little, says nothing, is of no perceptible consequence. But do you think I would put him down among my other characters, knowing nothing of him? I am far too conscientious. At Marseilles I studied the man, I have invented for him a history, a family. No man springs from nowhere, and those who read with eyes open will realise that here is a creation, 'This waiter,' they will say, 'is not a mere *garçon de café*, but a human being with soul and personality.'"

I shifted my seat. In fact I was rather bored and just a little inclined to laugh; only his extreme seriousness kept me at attention. Alan looked at me. He suggested whisky, and I gladly accepted. I noticed he took none himself and asked him if living in southern cafés had made him forsake whisky for absinthe.

"I don't

"I don't drink spirits," he said almost shyly, "I am afraid of them. At any cost I am going to keep my head clear and my brain untainted. I don't want people to speak of my work as of that of a mad genius. Above all else I must be sane, and spirits give an unnatural energy, an excited imagination. To a satire or political pamphlet, alcohol may give point, but the maker of beautiful things must rely entirely upon himself and his lightness of touch, his keen insight. His impartiality is bound to be impaired by stimulants. I am afraid you think me a prig. I have warned you before!"

"You punish yourself, at any rate, Alan," I answered him. "Great writers have managed to get on without such austerity, and have even produced great work, if one can credit rumour, while consuming quantities of whisky; I thought it was what one associated with——"

"With journalists and such creatures, not with real writers. I will take nothing to vitiate my imagination, just as I will do and see nothing to vitiate my taste. I never go to a music-hall or a theatre. Idealist or realist, whichever you be, the theatre will spoil you. How dramatists can allow actors to interpret—interpret!—their works, has always been a very painful problem to me."

As he talked, I realised to some extent what this man's life was. He was single-hearted, he believed in himself, and he sacrificed himself to his opinions. I looked upon him almost with awe, certainly with some apprehension, and I rose to go.

"Come and see me sometimes—often!" he said, as we shook hands. "I am generally alone, and occasionally lonely, so don't be afraid of disturbing me. Friendship and the companionship of friends can do no one anything but good."

"Come and dine with me?" I asked him.

"No,

"No, society is different. You will find me here when you want me, but I should not be an amusing visitor to you. Look!" and he pointed to a bundle of uncut books, "here is my night's work—Italian love songs. My hero writes one and he must know what to avoid before he sets himself to the work. Ah! My hero . . . for five months I have searched vainly for his name. I have looked in directories; I have walked the streets looking at the names over the shops, in vain. I have found no name to suit him—no name which is *his*."

"Why not try Smith?" I thought as I went downstairs. But when I got to my cosy chambers, I felt myself to be a low brute with no aim in life, and I thought of my friend reading his Italian love-songs in his rooms off the Strand. I saw him continually all through that summer. He steadily refused to leave London. His work was really in progress, and whenever I came to town for a day or two between my various visits in the country, I found my friend hard at work.

"When is the Chef d'Œuvre going to be finished?" I asked him one day, and I silently prayed heaven it might be soon, for Alan waxed thinner and paler as the summer gave place to autumn.

"I've been at it for over two years now and I shall finish it in a few months, if all goes well," he said, cheerfully. "But sometimes I stop altogether. I look for a word for several days, and then don't find it in the end. There are countless other troubles too wearisome to relate. When it is all over, I shall go to the South."

But he was never to go. As winter came on he fell ill, and yet he stuck to work. Day after day, night after night, he was at his desk, writing, almost letter by letter, his wonderful story.

One day (it was mid-way through November), on going to see him,

him, I found him frantically writing. His face was flushed and I thought that on it I saw the mark of tears. When I entered, he stood up quite still and looked at me. I saw that something had happened.

"I *must* tell some one. I will tell you," he gasped out. "This morning, I saw my doctor, and he tells me I have to die—only three weeks more and perhaps I shall be dead!"

He took a stride to his table and snatched up his pen. "But I must finish this. I must launch it on the world. I must know that it is safe. I shall never in this world know the estimation they put upon my work, but I shall at least know that it is safe. I realise now how hard it must be for a mother to die when her child is about to begin life. But how much harder if her child doesn't live and she goes out into the darkness, leaving nothing."

"You are going to publish the story?" I asked. I felt that commiseration for his fate would be out of place.

"I am going to send it to H——," and he named the editor of a well known Review. "I shall send it with just my initials and address. Perhaps H—— may have heard of me and of my life. I rather hope not. This gem shall have no borrowed light. It shall go without a word into the literary world, there to take up its place. But now I must be alone, I must finish my work. Good night."

And I left him. Every day I went to see him. Every day he seemed more feverish, more unearthly. A week later, when I called, I found him in bed, weary and feeble but quite calm.

"It is finished," he said. "I sent it off this morning, and now I have done. I hope I shall hear from him quickly. I wrote a note with it, and said that I was going abroad shortly and should hope to hear from him in a day or two."

"Why

"Why not go abroad?" I suggested, though I saw clearly he was far too ill.

"I have given my life for that one story, but I don't regret it. Most men die and leave nothing behind. I have given the world a possession. I have given it my best."

Day after day I sat with him. As I watched him dying, I realised how singularly simple and devoted his life had been. And he, we both, waited eagerly for news of his life's work.

One morning, a fortnight later, as I sat reading to him, a passage from the *Tentation de Saint Antoine*, his landlady came in with a note. I saw it was from the office of the — Review. I stretched out my hand to take it, but he prevented me, crying out with a petulant, childish anxiety.

"No, no, it is for me," he cried, clutching at it.

Thus the note ran: "Dear Sir,—We regret that your story, which we have perused with interest, can find no place in our pages. It is of no inconsiderable merit, but is somewhat crude and in places ill-considered. We should advise you however to persevere and in time no doubt you may produce something worthy."

As he reached the end, Alan Herbert turned his face to the wall and died.

“The Closed Manuscript”

By Constance Finch

“Alas ! that youth’s sweet scented manuscript should close.”

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.

I

IN youth’s sweet scented manuscript we wrote,
All through the perfect, rosy summer days,
And when the nightingale’s delicious note
Toned with love’s orison ; in reverent praise
We chronicled our joy with pencilled lays—
In that sweet scented manuscript we wrote.

II

All night embalmed in rose leaves soft ’twas laid,
Till the pale parchment glowed with rose tints rare,
As fainting lips from which the blood has strayed
Glow when requickened ; and the perfume there
Tinged with its subtle essence all the air—
Since all night long embalmed so soft ’twas laid.

Alas !

III

Alas ! we rolled it up one cloudy day,
When the rude winds of autumn ruffled it.
Torn was the leaf whereon no writing lay,
Yellow, it seemed, by no rose radiance lit.
And never more we twain therein have writ
Since it was folded up that cloudy day !

IV

Bury it somewhere, Love, for ever rolled,
(Perchance some leaves shall always sweet remain)
Beneath a rose-tree, in the soft, dark mould,
For this same summer shall not come again.
Oh ! lest we mar it with our tears, our pain—
Bury it somewhere, Love, for ever rolled !

Chopin Op. 47

By Stanley V. Makower

LATE in the afternoon of the seventeenth of October, eighteen hundred and eighty-nine, the atmosphere in the little private room of the Hotel Saxony was a mixture of cigar smoke and fog.

The crimson shades sank lower and lower over the candles. In one or two places the wire frames had toppled forward with their silk canopies, and the grease was guttering woefully, creeping over the edge of the candle and hurrying into little solid lumps which formed an ever-changing pattern down the side.

On the table were strewn the remains of a luxurious lunch ; a confusion of fruit, flowers, and wine. The party consisted solely of bachelors.

"Oceana," said the host, rising with his glass in his hand and bending slightly forward to propose the toast, while he appealed with his eyes to those round him. He was a young man, quietly dressed in a suit of a thick, dark material, but a large sapphire pin shone from his black satin tie.

The clear "tink" of glasses sounded as they met across the table.

Some

Some one began to wave his glass, and to hum *tempo di valse* :

“Sweet Oceana,
I'd give the world to gain her,
She's fair as any flower in the fields to sec.”

He hesitated ; trying to recall the words, with a confused look on his face, when another continued :

“I may be a duffer,
The scorn of men I'd suffer,
So long as Oceana won't look down on me.”

The last line was sung as a chorus by the whole party.

The wine had flowed freely, and the utmost conviviality and good humour reigned. They began to talk of Oceana's last appearance at the Ambassadeurs, when her yellow dress had been pronounced a triumph, and the French papers had declared that the long rows of yellow gas lamps had “quivered with sympathy.”

One man alone did not seem to share the enthusiasm of the rest.

He sat a little apart from them, running his shrivelled fingers abstractedly up and down the stem of his glass.

“You look gloomy,” said one.

“I look what I am,” he said, quietly ; “nearly twice as old as most of you here.” And he leaned his bald head heavily on his hand as he looked at the group of faces round him.

A feeble protest was raised by one or two who, without wishing to go into the details of age all round the table, were of opinion that his theory was not to be supported. The host tapped him mysteriously

mysteriously on the shoulder, shook his head at him, and laughed, saying :

"Take some more hock and forget your age," as from the long-necked bottle he poured the amber-coloured wine into his neighbour's glass.

But the man only smiled faintly as he pushed an imaginary lock of hair from his forehead, and murmured :

"I feel old ; sometimes it comes over me."

There was silence for a few moments, the querulous tone of the speaker having checked the merriment of the company.

One of the red silk shades caught fire and fell burning upon the table. Everybody rose to extinguish it, and sat down again disconsolately. Outside the lights were beginning to spring up along the street.

The next few minutes passed again in silence.

"Let us go," said some one at last.

The host rose toying with the pin in his tie, which he pulled up slightly and then pushed back into its place.

"Come to my rooms," he said, indicating a general invitation by a vague look in his eyes. "Suzanne Delisle is coming to play the piano."

No one dissented ; so they called for their hats and coats and went one behind the other out of the hot room, while a voice quavered out :

"The scorn of men I'd suffer,
So long as Oceana don't look down"

It stopped suddenly as they stepped into the cold, foggy street. They all shivered a little and then set out briskly. A walk of five minutes brought them to a house.

The

The host after standing under the gas lamp outside the front door and fumbling for some time with a bunch of keys, selected one and quickly slipped it into the lock. As he pushed, the door fell back noiselessly, leaving the key in his hand. When the others had trooped past him he shut the door behind him and they were left in darkness. Only the ends of two cigars glowed—tiny circles of fiery red—as the owners puffed at them.

"Two flights, nine steps each," said the host, "then wait till I get a match."

They stumbled up until some one said, "Stop."

The host opened the door and vanished into the room to find a match.

A faint glimmer of green mist made luminous by the gas lamp outside, indicated the position of a window, and over the landing, where the party stood waiting for a light, floated a warmer air loaded with the perfume of flowers which mingled with the heavy smell of the cigars.

The host was some time finding the match-box.

"Ah, here it is," he said at last, advancing to the door with it in his hand.

The unwieldy figure of the old man passed by him and sank into a large armchair close to the fireplace, in which glowed a small heap of dull, red coal. His eyelids were half closed—for the wine and the fog had made him drowsy, so that he did not see the others as they followed the host in procession across the room. He felt several people brush past him, then he heard a confused babble of voices; that was all.

Lights glimmered, changing the colour that hung before his eyelids, and he began to imagine that he was in the little room of the Saxony, and that, if he were to open his eyes, he would see the table strewn with its confusion of plates and glasses. And the

figure of a man, rising with his glass in his hand and stooping forward to propose a toast swam before him.

Then he thought he heard a noise as of the opening of a piano, which threw him back to his boyhood, and he fancied that he was at home and that his mother was playing to him.

They were in the little sitting-room with its walls crowded with faded photographs of Rome and Pompeii in black frames. His mother sat at the piano with her back to him : her head was slightly turned so that he could see her profile, and her forehead and hair were lit up by the candle-light.

Divinely fair she looked. And as he listened he felt in his hands the touch of that silken hair which he stroked every night before he kissed her and went to bed.

He was sitting at some distance from her, wrapt in wonder, for her music was like magic.

Then it seemed to him that he closed his eyes in an ecstasy.

Now it was early morning in a forest, and he was treading noiselessly across the carpet of damp, decayed leaves, winding his way in and out of the stems of tall trees, whose branches were dashed with dew. And all the vigour of youth was in his limbs as he walked joyously, breathing in the soft, moist air, and shaking his head to toss back the thick lock of hair that fell over his eyes.

Now he had flung himself down at the edge of a wide pool and was gazing on its motionless surface. Reflected in it he saw the image of his own face, young and beautiful.

And he smiled. And a light breeze sent a quiver through the forest making the leaves rustle faintly.

The spirit of youth burned quick within him ; and he was filled with vague desire to do some great emprise. On the surface of the pool before him, floated the image of tall, waving trees.

Then

Then as he looked deep down into the water the mirrored forest melted away to the edge of the pool and before him rose a castle, dark, mysterious, fronted by broad lawns with several towers in dull purple, one taller than the rest.

Long and earnestly he gazed.

* * * * *

A sunbeam struck one of the mullioned windows, which opened and a woman appeared, leaning forward as if to listen. Then the window was closed again.

Far in the distance the tramp of hoofs, trample of hoofs.

Nearer they come, nearer and nearer.

Lo, a knight clad in shining armour on a white horse with flowing mane. Now he is at the edge of the forest, now on the lawn, now under the tower that is tallest, and his white horse prances and caracoles, prances and caracoles.

And as the sun grows stronger the trappings of his horse flash with bright gems, which scatter their light about him as he moves in ever varying figures swifter and swifter.

The mullioned window is open again.

From below it come the sounds of many people bestirring themselves. Now the full light of day is over the castle.

The knight dances up and down on his shining steed. Behind him dance the shadows of an army of knights on white horses which follow him in every movement. Wilder and wilder he grows—swaying from side to side. And the shadows sway from side to side. All through the day they dance in front of the castle until horse and rider grow weary and jaded, and the knight stands still beneath the tower that is taller than the rest.

And the shadows stand still.

A shower of rose leaves pours from the window of the princess. Rose leaves, rose leaves, rose leaves. As they fall from her white fingers

fingers a breeze blows them about, tossing them into endless patterns, until a cloud of rose leaves is about the knight, and the lawns are strewn with soft petals.

He turns his head to the window, and as he raises his vizor, the twilight that falls upon his armour quickens to points of ruddy gold.

Dimmer and dimmer grow the lights that flash from the jewelled horse, as he rides away followed by the army of shadows, and all is dark.

The sound of the running of innumerable small feet and of muffled laughter comes now from the wood. Elves tear up and down in front of the castle, which is all black save where a light burns in the window of the princess. The laughter grows to shrieks as they come in thousands, leaping and dancing frantically in mimicry of the knight's dance. An elf mounted on a rabbit scampers up and down the lawn, and each time that he passes under the window of the princess, the light flickers.

Suddenly a gust of wind raises the dead leaves in the wood, so that they are whirled aloft higher and higher in front of the castle, rushing and crackling. They hit one another, tossed hither and thither in their passage through the air until the wind drops and they tumble, flying helter-skelter, jostling one another, whispering, fluttering down to the ground.

Far in the distance the tramp of hoofs, trample of hoofs.

Dawn begins to glimmer. As the hoofs come nearer the noise of the elves grows fainter. They scamper off to the wood to bar the knight's way. They pinch and scratch and bite him, they tug at his helmet until it falls from his head, but he presses onward; nearer, nearer, until the sunbeam strikes the window of the princess, from which something

waves

waves in the breeze, and the elves creep away with a faint, droning cry.

The knight prances up on his white steed, at the back of him are the army of shadows. At the window waving a long white scarf the princess stands, and her eyes shine like stars.

A shower of rose leaves falls from her window. Rose leaves, rose leaves, rose leaves.

Now she is seated on a pillion behind the knight, and they ride off in a cloud of rose leaves, and the jewels on the knight's horse flash in the sunlight.

* * * * *

Was it a horse—a white horse?

How the rose leaves whispered and fluttered.

He rubbed his hand across his face and felt the wrinkles with which it was indented, while in the darkness of his mind he was vaguely conscious of a wide pool, over which the wind had sent a ripple.

How his limbs ached. He half raised his eyelids and then closed them again wearily, waving his hand feebly in front of him as if to put away the reality that was breaking upon his dream.

But in spite of himself his eyes opened.

The fire had gone quite out, and he shivered slightly. Through an arched opening at the end of the room he saw a woman with auburn hair seated at the piano with her back to him. Her head was slightly turned so that he could see her profile, and her hair and forehead were lit up by the candle-light.

She was smiling to a group of men who stood round her.

The man in the armchair groaned a little. By his side was a bowl of roses, the perfume of which filled his nostrils. He shut his eyes for a moment, trying to see the picture of
the

the white horse, but it evaded him and his eyes would not keep closed.

A man-servant entered with a lamp, revealing a room richly furnished with carved oak. The walls were covered with oil pictures in heavy frames. Here and there stood bronze statues by modern French sculptors, and on the table upon which the lamp had been placed, the soft yellow light fell on a number of curious objects: old silver boxes, medallions in jewelled frames, tiny porcelain vases, trays of coins and rings.

Suzanne Delisle rose from the piano and advanced into the room.

Three Pictures

By C. F. Pears

- I. Bradda Head, Isle of Man
- II. Aberystwith, from Constitution Hill
- III. Study of a Head







Lot 99

By Ada Radford

THE library in the house where I was born was a well aired and well dusted room, but the things we kept in it were so connected in the mind with dust and fustiness that it was difficult to feel happy there.

There were preserved fish of various kinds hanging from the walls, there was a large glass case of sea birds, one of many varieties of inland birds, cases of minerals, and, all over the mantel-piece, and on the shelves, there were little Hindoo gods, models of Keltic crosses, models of every imaginable thing from Cleopatra's needle to the Eddystone lighthouse.

As a child I hated this room. Although it was called the library there were few books in it. The writing-desk, where I was often sent to do my lessons, was horribly uncomfortable and in a bad light.

My lessons always took me a long time in this room, for although I hated being there, and longed to be away, and off with Lionel, the evil-looking gods, and the fishes glaring at me with their glass eyes, chained me to the spot. I never felt at home, and yet I remember that Aunt Lizzie had been all round the room with me, and had told me the history of every object, where father had bought it, and how much it had cost, and I could hear

my voice, as a sound outside me, saying : "Yes, Auntie, did he really?" and hers, like a nearer sound in answer, to my surprise : "My dear child, that's a trifle for a genuine antique."

How I hated those birds and fishes ! Not only were they dead, but the life had been dried, inflated, and stuffed out of them, and horror of horrors, glass eyes had been forced into their senseless heads.

And yet one day I heard Aunt Lizzie tell a lady she was calling on, that I was wonderfully intelligent. "It's the kind of mind I like," she said. "She's like our side of the family, she takes interest in external objects."

I can see Aunt Lizzie's bonnet now as she said it. The mauve that blondes used to wear, and on one side, a daring arrangement in imitation coral and sea-weed. Even in her bonnets Aunt Lizzie's personality shone out, and very marked were the personalities of what I now learnt was *my* side of the family.

It did not improve the library to my mind that Aunt Lizzie chose it as the place in which to hang large photographs of her brothers and sisters. They were striking people ; I felt it as a child when I met them, and now I am sure of it. Amiable, strong willed and capable, they indeed were always interested in external objects. They were a great contrast to the other side of the family, my mother's side, "your poor dear mother" as Aunt Lizzie always called her, although my father who was also dead was always referred to simply as John. Of my mother and her people I knew little, our grandparents were dead and my mother's only sister was married and had a large family of her own in Australia.

"I think your poor dear mother did wonderfully considering her people," I remember Aunt Lizzie once said to me. "They never got on. No common sense. Fortunately your mother
married

married young, and altered a good deal. At first she had the most unpractical ideas. She would have no nurse for you children. She would tell her housemaid not to hurry home in the evening if she were enjoying herself. She thought of every one before herself ; that's very pretty in a young girl, but it may be carried too far. John's influence steadied her. But I used to think that John was just the least little bit foolish about her, although I like to see a happy marriage ; but really John gave one the idea that there was no one but Mary in the world. He sometimes neglected his own people. It was not your mother's fault, my dear ; no one could have been more anxious to have us. John got an idea that she ought to have quiet, and insisted on it, and poor Mary died when you were six ; and we might have brightened her last days much more than we did, but for John's obstinacy. Your mother was a most lovable woman. I was almost glad John never noticed her lack of common sense."

I had very little to remind me of my mother. I had been given a little packet of letters, of father's to her and hers to father, but I had burnt them unread ; besides those I had nothing but a few little trinkets. Dainty old-fashioned things ; beautiful, although bought in the days of the worst taste. Little things that his sisters would not have looked at. I liked them. They strengthened a feeling I had that my mother had made her impression on one member of the family of dominant personalities, at any rate he had cared to know her mind and tastes, and I felt more gently towards the ladies and gentlemen who hung in the library with their marked features and heavy ornaments. To one of them the family qualities had not been everything, and a member of a family doomed as regards success had been made a close study of. Still I was oppressed in the library, the features of the uncles and aunts, the want of view from the window, the glass eyes

eyes of innumerable birds, the height of the room, or the combination of all these things, made my heart feel solid lead and my head a disused machine. And it seems to me now in looking back that whenever anything painful has happened to me it has happened in that room ; if I have a nightmare I am there and every object is in its place ; although last time I saw the most hated of them, they were together in a heap (lot 99), at the sale.

In that room I fought my first important battle and lost. I think I was too anxious to be calm and logical. I knew my brother's opinion of girls. I knew that he had had a legal training, and I knew that I had had no training. I wanted him to tell me whether it would be possible for my trustees to advance me some capital.

It would not have surprised him more if I had asked whether he thought it well that I should keep a tame tiger, but he only raised his eyebrows slightly. It was a possibility under the will, he said, if the trustees were prepared to take a certain amount of responsibility in the matter.

He sat at the desk, and I having put my tennis hat on one stiff backed chair took the other, as near the window as I could get. I told him that I wanted it for educational purposes, and he asked me what had been wrong with my education.

I told him that it had not left me in a position to maintain myself.

"Let us be practical," Lionel said, assuming the expression of one of his uncles on the wall ; and he made a few notes on a bit of paper.

"When you are thirty," he told me next, "you will be independent,

independent, because that little property of mother's falls to you then."

I was nineteen.

"Thirty!" I said quietly. "I might as well be dead."

Lionel did not argue that point. He looked at me critically. I felt him notice my disordered hair and blue flannel blouse.

"You are pretty," he said judicially.

I was annoyed that I blushed, but I said in a sufficiently matter-of-fact tone: "But not very."

He acquiesced, and said, "It's difficult not to be pretty in this climate at nineteen. I don't think it will last."

"No," I broke in eagerly. "It's only complexion. Aunt Lizzie said so a few days ago."

Lionel looked a little surprised at my eagerness to go off, but I knew well that my looks were being weighed against the probability of my doing anything. His next words confirmed my suspicions.

"You'll marry," he remarked.

"Lionel," I said in a tone so emphatic that again he raised his eyebrows slightly, "I shall not marry," and I meant it.

Lionel smiled the smile of a man who has lived five years longer than the person he is speaking to, and that person his sister.

It was true that sometimes on our country walks I had wished that I were engaged, for Jack and Lionel would not stop long in beautiful places, and they would not let me pick things; if I said I wanted to, they would stuff my hands full of flowers and hurry me along. If I saw something pretty across a stream and waded for it, Jack would say: "Do come on, stupid! you're getting your feet wet!" and yet the bogs he'd have brought me through that very day! And I had thought vaguely, that the person I

was

was engaged to would not mind waiting for me, or be bored at loitering. But I never had these ideas indoors, and the knowledge that Lionel was weighing my chances drove all lingering romance from my head.

"I have never had an offer," I said, hoping that this statement would have due weight with him in his final decision.

Lionel's smile this time made me flush indignantly. I saw that he was laughing at me.

"Aunt Lizzie had had more than one before she was my age," I said coolly, "but I do not see what this has to do with the question."

"It has this," said Lionel, "whether we boys marry or not, we have our livings to get; you have not to, you have a home with Aunt Lizzie until you marry, and in any case just enough money of your own when you are thirty. It would be simple madness to touch your capital."

I felt completely crushed. I did not in reality know enough about our affairs to ask an intelligent question, and Lionel's last emphatic statement had made its impression. He saw that he had won.

"What had you thought of doing?" he asked now not unkindly.

"I thought I'd prepare myself to be a teacher," I said apologetically.

"Oh don't," he said. "You'd find it an awful grind, you wouldn't be half so jolly, and when we came home there'd only be Aunt Lizzie, or if you were here at all, you'd be half asleep and talking shop." I suppose I did not look convinced, for Lionel grew really distressed and his legal manner disappeared completely, and he said with what for him was a show of feeling, "We always said we'd stick together, Grace."

None

None the less that this was the first I had heard of it I was moved, my plans melted away. I held out my hand and renewed the compact, although vaguely I realised that it meant Lionel would go and I should stick.

If in my little bedroom there were no objects of interest, it was not Aunt Lizzie's fault, but my own.

Lionel had won and I had given up the idea of going away from home for the time being, but from that day I spent some hours every day in my bedroom studying, preparing, working for examinations, so that I should be ready—for what I hardly knew.

Aunt Lizzie expressed disappointment that I did not choose to do my work in the library, but on that point I was firm. I could hardly tell her that I disliked the birds and fishes; if I had, the statement would have been met with the same pained surprise as if I had told her I disliked the portrait of my uncle, the Rev. Samuel Bayley, that hung under the most surprising swordfish in the room. So I did not go into the matter. I simply told her that I preferred my own room, and every morning I found the maid had lighted the fire there and made it ready for me. I think no girl ever had an easier aunt to live with.

For more than a year I worked very hard; but I said nothing to Lionel about it, from a feeling I had that he might think it unfair of me.

Aunt Lizzie stood by me in this effort at doing some solid work. For I remember once, that an old friend of my mother's who took an interest in me, pointed out to us that it was a pity for a girl to be too clever, and to lose her opportunities.

Once I came into the drawing-room when she and Aunt
Lizzie

Lizzie were engaged in eager conversation. I was going away again, but Aunt Lizzie kept me, saying, "We were saying nothing unsuitable for you to hear, my dear."

I guessed as I turned over a book on the table that this was hardly her visitor's opinion.

"The women of my family have never been dolls," asserted Aunt Lizzie.

Any one who knew the women of Aunt Lizzie's family would know that when she started from such a fundamental proposition she was ready for a keen argument.

"There is, I hope, something between a doll and a blue-stocking," tittered the other lady, and pointed out that while under proper guidance she thought it quite right that a girl should study, she thought it a great pity she should obtrude her knowledge in conversation. She thought that most unattractive, especially to gentlemen.

"I have never found," said Aunt Lizzie, "that knowledge and intelligence are unappreciated by the other sex. On the contrary——"

She broke off, she was so obviously in a position to judge that it would have been indelicate on her part to pursue the point she had made.

"I know they appreciate it," said Mrs. Merrit, with a curious stress on the word appreciate, "but down here in the country, at any rate, I don't think they like it in their wives;" and then we were told, with the little nervous giggle that I knew Aunt Lizzie thought detestable, that the girls Mrs. Merrit knew who got engaged first were not clever, not even pretty, but gentle and anxious to please.

"I have no wish for my niece to become engaged while her judgment is immature," said Aunt Lizzie. Mrs. Merrit would have liked to point out that by the time the judgment is matured
the

the complexion has gone off, but Aunt Lizzie with her handsome face, her few words, and the manner of her family, was frightening this eminently feminine little person.

I was amused at the conversation, but I turned rather wearily away. I wandered round the library, and finding no rest there, went out into the garden. Lionel had been at home so little lately. My time when I had done my work hung very heavily on my hands. I wanted to get away from home, where, I did not know or care. I was amused at Aunt Lizzie and the family. Of course I thought, of course I studied. Of course we weren't dolls, the women of our family.

What a curious emphatic way Aunt Lizzie had with her.

I was in the library with Lionel one evening. He was a full-fledged lawyer now, living at home with us in the old house. Latterly I had not seen much of him. He was out a great deal. I had fancied he seemed worried. But it was not our way to sympathise with each other. My standard of manners and expression of feeling had been learnt from my brothers. Lionel and I had even left off our good-night kiss. "It's rather a senseless form," I had said, and that settled it.

It had been a very hot day. Lionel sat at the desk writing, and I at the open window. I was oppressed and pining for air, but I had an unusual feeling that I must wait for Lionel to go into the garden with me.

"Grace, I want to tell you something."

My heart seemed to stop, for into our even lives something was coming.

I knew it, for Lionel's usually matter-of-fact voice was charged with feeling.

"Will you tell me in the garden?" I asked.

But no, he would rather tell me where we were. I cannot remember the words he used. I remember that I tried not to show how much I felt, and encouraged him quietly to talk. It was this: it seemed that Lionel was going to marry a girl I had never seen, a girl not in our social position, and I remember now in what a relieved tone he said:

"But I knew that you would not mind about that," and I only gathered gradually that there was something more than this. He did not think she was a girl Aunt Lizzie would receive; it was a marriage that would hurt his practice—perhaps a little separate him from friends.

Suddenly I had kissed Lionel, the first time for years. I do not know what I said; I had only one thought in the midst of my feelings—that he should feel that there was some one who would love her, some one who did not care what people said.

He stroked my hair and seemed touched and surprised at my warmth. In my heart was a great joy that a subtle barrier I had felt between us was gone. I asked no questions and had hardly any fears. He must love her, that was enough. He must be right. Only one thing would have broken my heart—if Lionel had not depended on me to love her too.

A few days later, although I had never seen her I fought Nelly's battle with Aunt Lizzie. And it seemed that I won, for in the evening I was able to tell Lionel that Aunt Lizzie had written to ask Nelly to stay with us, before their wedding which was to take place soon.

I see now that Aunt Lizzie did all in her power to save Lionel
from

from this step, and I used all my strength and inexperience to hurry him.

"He loves her," I said, as if that settled the matter.

And there in her favourite room Aunt Lizzie enlightened me about the world I lived in.

Fierce indignation woke in my heart, and unreasoningly it was directed against Aunt Lizzie, none the less that I knew she was telling me facts. One moment I hated her for telling me, and the next I was hating her for not having told me before; and then myself for the way I took it.

Aunt Lizzie did not guess how much she was stirring me. I sat very quiet while she talked. I can remember her saying that many people, even the clergy, thought it right to chain a young man to his folly, to make him bear the consequences. In that she saw a lack of common sense. She would never be one to drive Lionel.

The only light I could stretch out into all this darkness was my love for Lionel. For better or worse, I had given him my hand over this marriage, and Aunt Lizzie, although she did her best to make me use my influence with him, might just as well have talked to one of the stuffed birds in the cases.

When she found it was useless, as regards Nelly's visit she gave in completely and graciously, and I knew her well enough to know that she would do her best to make it pleasant for her.

I have often thought since how well Aunt Lizzie bore with us both, with Lionel and me. For she was proud of Lionel, of his brains and his common sense, and in both of us up to this time she had seen the qualities of her own family, and now Lionel was on the brink of a piece of quixotic folly, and I was backing him up.

In all that talk Aunt Lizzie did not once remind me of my youth and inexperience. She told me facts and she appealed to my common sense. However often she thought of her, she did not once mention my poor dear mother.

But I had only one clear idea in my head : the world was a hard cruel unjust place ; Lionel chose to defy it. No one I cared for should defy it alone.

I have often thought that Aunt Lizzie was not unjustly proud of the common sense of her family, but I have wondered if she ever knew how much I appreciated a quality she had that was not common sense.

It was some weeks after that scene in the library in which nominally I had come off victorious. Lionel's Nelly had been with us a week. Aunt Lizzie and I had never spoken of her since she came. Lionel and I had tried to once, but we never tried again and never shall.

I was alone in the library, the gloomy room. I tried to look forward. What was there in my life ? How I had wound it round Lionel and his happiness, and now it took all my strength to hide my bitter disappointment ! Lionel was entrapped—befooled. I had given him my word that I would stand by him and her. But what lifeless support !

I could not save him. The less I was with them the better. My heart grew heavier and heavier. Could Lionel with his keen sense mistake the tawdry little thing ? More painful was the thought that was beginning to take possession of me that he had not mistaken her ; he saw, and seeing had made up his mind.

Looking forward I could see nothing in my own life. Of what use was my love to Lionel ? Life and health were strong within

within me ; outside—nothing, nothing. I burst into tears ; unconscious that I could be seen from the garden, unconscious of everything but my own misery. All the objects in the room were blurred, Nelly's face was everywhere, and Lionel's voice when he first told me about her.

I became aware that some one was in the room and close to me. I started up in terror. It might be Lionel. Not only would he see me crying but he would know why, and then what use——

It was Aunt Lizzie, who had seen me from the garden and had come in quickly.

"Lionel and Nelly, dear, are coming down the path," she said, in a matter-of-fact, but rather hurried voice.

I rose quickly and stood out of sight. Aunt Lizzie had done me a great kindness. A week or two ago I had told her that I at any rate should love Nelly, that I was not chained by conventional ideas, that Lionel was and must be the best judge where his own feelings were concerned.

She must have seen my struggles to keep up for days. Now she had her enemy down she would not say a word, I knew. What humiliation she could she had saved me. I wanted her to know that I appreciated her generosity ; and as I stood at the door on my way upstairs, I made an effort to speak. Apparently she did not hear me, for she said in a vexed tone as she too left the room :

"In spite of all this education it will be a long time before we get any really nice feeling into the working classes. That new girl has taken a piece of old lace I left on my dressing-table—a piece that belonged to your grandmother, my dear—and she's actually starched and ironed it !"

The vivid light that any sudden change throws on the past may not be a true light, but I know that when Aunt Lizzie died, for a long time I saw our early life at home as one sees the scenes on the brightly lighted stage; the present as the dim faces around one, and the future not at all. My later friends, the ties I had formed, such joys and troubles as I had, claimed for a time a small share in my thoughts.

They were busied with scraps of Aunt Lizzie's talk; all I should ever hear now of my mother and father. Lionel, Jack, and I, children walking, learning, living together, and Aunt Lizzie in our midst, always treating us as rational, almost as grown-up, beings; the house, the garden, in which parts were always kept "as John left them, my dear," the seat he had put for "your poor dear mother," so sheltered, that in that western country, the year she died, she had sat out of doors in November.

I had had a happy childhood, except for vague depressions which I had never tried to account for. My lacks were too great for any child to grasp. Looking back, there are some things in my bringing-up for which I am most grateful.

It was with my brothers that I learnt to love Nature, so that it was not as a series of pictures one turns tired eyes on in the hope of finding rest and refreshment, but as some people love their homes. I learnt to live out of doors; we walked, we swam, we ate and slept, as it pleased us, in the open air. We did not go into the country in the July and August glare, and sit shivering by our fires in the other months. We watched the spring come in, and we tramped the winter through. Better than a cloudless summer day we loved a storm, and to be swept dry after it by the north-west wind.

There were bad times ahead of me, for I had made the mistake Aunt Lizzie made, in thinking that I had the stable qualities of
her

her family. I am glad that she never knew how completely they failed me. But I would give, if I could, to any one else, who had painful surprises in store for them, the part of my life that I spent in the open air with my brothers.

And one other thing I am grateful for—that Aunt Lizzie treated me, long before I deserved it, as a rational being. I feel no compunction when I realise that I got this treatment entirely under false pretences. The features of her family—a boy's standard of outspokenness and endurance in external things—have taken in other people besides Aunt Lizzie. But this much she gave me of what she expected from me: that when I saw my failure, though there were many names by which it might have been called, I put them away and gave it the ugliest and the truest.

One of Aunt Lizzie's brothers was at the funeral. I had never seen much of Uncle Willie. We walked, after it was over, around the desolate garden, more desolate, I thought, because down there flowers linger into November that should be over and done with long before.

Uncle Willie took comfort in what seemed to me the strangest things; in the number of persons present at the burial, and in the fact that the mourning of some very distant cousins was as deep as our own.

One thing he regretted—that the house must be sold. "Neither of your brothers is in a position to buy it," he said regretfully, and then touched on their careers: Lionel's unfortunate marriage; Jack's absurd scheme, which had been broached to him to-day, and which he was glad, indeed, dear Lizzie had not lived to hear, of giving up the bar, where he promised to do well,
for

for writing, if you please, using the little capital Aunt Lizzie had left him in the meantime.

I heard Uncle Willie's voice rather distantly as our feet sounded on the gravel, and felt a certain gratitude to him that, although his position might have justified it, he did not touch on my life or affairs. He simply told me that my new black was most becoming, and that I had managed to make every one as comfortable as possible on this sad occasion. I was relieved when he was gone, and mechanically I turned into the library, which I knew now would soon be dismantled, and although it was not from affection as of old, once there, my feet seemed rooted.

After a time, Lionel and Jack came in, and we stayed there, talking in our old quiet, undemonstrative way about the sale and the arrangements we had to make. I remember my relief when Lionel told me that if I did not want them, he and Jack would like the photographs of our uncles and aunts; and he told me, too, that Aunt Lizzie had said she thought I should like to have some of the things that father had bought.

"I don't want any of them," I said. "Wouldn't some museum be glad of these things?" and I pointed to the birds and the fishes and many other objects in the room.

I think Jack was a little shocked at my want of sentiment, but Lionel's smile, as he said: "You never cared for relics," took me back to our childhood, the time when we were such great friends.

The Wind and the Tree

By Charles Catty

SANG the wind to the tree,
O be mournful with me :
There is nothing can last or can stay ;
And the joy of new leaves
Turns to sorrow that grieves
The bare bough—on a day,
On a day.

Sang the tree to the wind,
O be happy—I find
There is nothing time fails to restore ;
And the fall that bereaves,
Makes the joy of new leaves
In the spring—evermore,
Evermore.

The wind sighed to the tree,
O be mournful with me :
The leaves come not again that I blow ;
And I mourn for the lives
No renewal revives,
The leaves fall'n—long ago,
Long ago.

Gabriele d'Annunzio

The New Poet and His Work

By Eugene Benson

"Sovran maestro d'ogni melodia"

I

THE new romance and the new prose come to us from Italy. After the attempt, first in France, then here, to make prose a richer means of expression, it is interesting to see what has been done in Italian.

It is one thing to limit language, as in a leading article, to the mere understanding, that is, to the business style; it is another thing to make it correspond with, and express, the whole range of emotion and thought of a poet.

The pedestrian step of the rank and file of writers, doubtless, is the proper result of discipline; fit for daily use; it leads one forward from fact to fact; but it is not wise to confine all movement of mind and heart to its pace and form.

The concise phrase showing the greatest economy of words, and the most effective use of them for a given purpose, is not an illustration of all the resources of language. For a whole order of sensations and ideas—those of the poet and the artist, that is to say

say the interpreters and illustrators of life—the language of a great soldier, or a great moralist, is inadequate. There is the ever-recurring search for and sign of new forms of expression. The reserved and parsimonious masters of the word are displaced to make room for the givers of the magnificent ; magnificence is as much a part of greatness of style as it is a part of greatness of character. The splendour of the true is the beautiful. In art, form is not cut down as for a thing of speed only, but it is a generous thing to give full expression, not to stint it. The symbol of style is not the Greek runner with everything superfluous for his purpose eliminated, but rather one would accept the idea of music, with its vast and varied harmonies, its searching note, as indicating in a better way the richest expressional power. And it is to make prose like music that the new style is attempted.

Carlyle, uncouth and wilful, yet flashing his own Rembrandt-like light on one feature ; Ruskin, intemperate, insular, arbitrary, yet with a splendour of style all his own, made us welcome Matthew Arnold, who led us to form our expression, as he in part had done, after the clear, grave and restrained masters of French style. Our prose became cold and somewhat barren ; it stiffened ; it lost its free movement. Swinburne and Pater, the one with an opulent phrase, the other with a choice phrase, at once delicate, subtle and alluring, touched a newly-awakened sense of beauty, but touched only a few readers. Yet so far, they liberated us from the stricter prose reactionists, who, like Stendhal, made it a point of good sense as of virtue not to attempt the splendid rhetoric of the great masters. Yet the new prose and the new romance failed to appear ; at least, they came not with all their means of expression in perfect use, with perfect choice of word, with that life quickening them without which they are extravagant and ineffective.

In spite of all that has been done in modern prose, if the plain straight tale is all we ask for, we must go back for the best of the kind. Story for story, we may still prefer the Book of Daniel to the Book of Flaubert, and Susannah, the delicate woman, simply and charmingly presented, is more engaging than the much elaborated *Salammô*.

Voltaire's opinion that the Bible stories are masterpieces, is not discredited by our later tales, though with our modern literature there comes in a new element, pagan, chivalric, refined; the worship of woman, the cult of beauty. The most brilliant examples of it are still Italian. And it is not only the woman, but the lady, who is enthroned in the new art.

The new prose and the new romance are the work of Italy's new poet, Gabriele d'Annunzio, who, in *le Vergine delle Rocce*, seeks to make prose do all that poetry has done, that is, yield itself to every breath of emotion, pliant to every sensation. He would make it like Shelley's verse. And it is claimed that he has enlarged the domain of language. The uses to which he has put his prose imply a less trammelled life than that which our moralists accept. His style is the result of an unfailing sense of beauty, of a passion for, and power to express life, without which it would be but a wordy and incontinent thing, flaccid, nerveless, swollen, ineffective and fatiguing.

We may prefer the etchist point to the brush, but the brush of a Titian or a Rubens gives us richer sensations of beauty than the acid-bitten style of the daily dreadful.

It is fit that from the land of leisure and of art should come the new romance and the new prose, and it is proper that it should be the gift of the new poet of Italy, whose lyric achievement is perfect and unquestioned; whose artistic needs and aristocratic preferences forbid him to submit to business aims and democratic ideals.

ideals. The old stirring romance of adventure, with every page appealing to the dramatic sense, or at least to our love of action, which enthralls the average reader, seems but made for busy men and for coarse brains. The imaginative art of the new romance has nothing in common with it ; the poetic and artistic expression of the new romance really exacts a more cultivated mind, or at least one upon which all the refinements of thought and expression are not lost, but give to it a distinct pleasure. If you depreciate this kind of pleasure, you stop short with the robust, but miss the finer flowers of the "Garden of Words."

In the new romance, the taste for literature and art is fully met. The phrase in it is a thing of beauty, a constant joy ; it takes us into a charmed world, where the ideal transfigures the real ; but it does so without weakening our sense of actuality ; it rather enriches it, rooted in it, as it is ; very different from the spurious, the vague, the formless attempts at imaginative art.

Without some knowledge of Italian genius and culture, d'Annunzio's last Romance is hardly likely to be understood, nor is there anything like it in any language but his own. To tell the mere story of it would be but to give a skeleton, and ask you to imagine the sumptuous, the voluptuous beauty of a living woman, proud and simple and unashamed in all the grace and charm of her seductiveness. The method of criticism which divests a tale of its language is fit only for the dull who have no sense of language, and to whom a phrase is like a vestment that may be removed, not a vital part of the thing, as it is in d'Annunzio's narrative.

Claudio Cantelmo, the hero of his story, is of an ancient and illustrious race. After spending his youth according to the devices of his heart, he retires to his estate to recover himself.

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His only neighbours are a strange and secluded family, of which the two princes of Castromitano were friends of his youth. The three Virgins of the Romance are the three sisters, very beautiful, who—with their mad mother, the Princess Aldoini, and their father, Prince Luigi, embittered and saddened by exile—become so deeply interesting to the hero and to the reader. They appear and disappear as in a magic mirror. Vividly as they are presented there is little of the shock of action; the dramatic movement is so suave, it is as though they came and went according to some rhythmic law, to the sound of music, graceful, harmonious, beautiful. There is an air of high breeding, of melancholy, of reserve, as in Poe's *Ligeia*, as in his *Fall of the House of Usher*; there is the sense of latent passion, of malady, of mysterious destiny; but the reader is kept this side of the dangerous edge of circumstance; reflection takes the place of action. One follows their personal life at intervals not only to be led by curiosity to know their fortunes, but to get the most brilliant expression of a beautiful mind. For the obvious sense of the hero's situation, involving his choice of a wife, has yet a richer interest. The writer touches the profoundest elements of life with such high Italian dignity and grace that he is never betrayed into anything unworthy his fine art, and he shows complete deliverance from the rank company of realism; he is poetic; his work is a work of art, as art has been understood in Italy before it was infected with the baser things of its decadence.

It is in this new Romance that d'Annunzio appears with something like a new faith. Released from the revolting realism and the questionable types of several of his former books, he puts forth a new Declaration of Independence, not for the many but for the few. He at least will resist mediocrity instead of writing to please it in conformity with its tastes. He has seen that the sense of style

style is rare, that the many are incapable of recognising it ; for the many are only curious about life, and dull about art. The problem for the real artist is to inform art with life, and make art give shape to life, which is in fact its highest office—for the art of life is more than the art of painting, or music ; it is the result of all art acting on the stuff of our days as they come and go. And yet we call artists, only those who, mastering the technique of some art, produce beautiful works, yet live sordidly, mindless that the great artist is like Goethe, who makes a beautiful and harmonious whole of his life.

Now that d'Annunzio appears to have "dominated the inevitable tumults of his youth," and walks in the paths of art and beauty with a pure and serene mind, made free by the truth, we are to recognise him as master, not only of his art, but of himself. He emerges from his sense-bound experience with a high philosophy of being. In a magnificent tribute to Socrates, "the Master," he repeats the immortal narrative of Phædo, the beloved disciple. Few pages of modern literature are comparable to his account of the Platonic dialogue. It is in *le Vergine delle Rocce* that you can read anew the impressive story of the last moments of Socrates, even to the caressing gesture of the serene philosopher, who pauses in his discourse on death, and the soul, and immortality, to touch with a playful hand the beautiful hair of Phædo. The Platonic narrative is reproduced, freshened and quickened to serve anew as the note of "music" for which d'Annunzio himself is striving. He strikes a philosophic note ; he shows a Pagan sense of beauty. The book opens with a solemn, almost Sacerdotal, intonation. The carnal muse of the new poet seems absent, and we are led to expect the development of his theme guided by the antique lover of wisdom, with a full expression of the higher life of the senses and the soul. It holds nothing vulgar or common, and it aims to
express

express the beautiful, in evoking the three ideals of conduct, the three ideals embodied in the three virgins; the ideal of religious life, of filial devotion, of impassioned love of beauty, as it is in the three sisters in their reserved and hidden life, for the moment subject to the dominating egotism of the masculine will, embodied in the hero of the story.

There may be some disappointment if you take d'Annunzio's *Romance* expecting in it the English pattern for domestic use. It is representative of the Latin or Pagan genius, that is, not the genius of morality, or of what Matthew Arnold called *Conduct*, but the genius of life and art, in a land of never failing beauty.

Much of his former prose is given to record the excesses of passion in types both degenerate and repugnant, though portrayed and expressed with mastery. But many of his shorter stories are quite enchanting, filled with the loveliness of spring, with the purity of dawn. He shows us the Italian peasant of the Abruzzi, and gives us descriptions of a part of Italy but little known; primitive, antique, curiously interesting. The orange orchards, the olive slopes, far down the Adriatic; millions of roses, festal processions and the incredible fanaticism and passion of religion of the Abruzzi *contadini*;—measureless life under the most *subjugating* influences, not so much described as felt and depicted by him, while again and again his marvellous prose is illuminated by the word of the poet, as in *Les Cloches* and *Annales d'Anne*—translated into French by E. Hérèle. There is in them the magic and the charm of nature. *Les Cloches* of d'Annunzio may be compared with *Les Cloches* of Victor Hugo, in *Notre Dame*, to the advantage of the Italian prose writer, for his expression is richer, more artistic and convincing.

As to his theory of art, it appears that dulness alone is forbidden to the artist; that art without life is a dead thing, life without art,

art, brutal. With a sense that shrinks before nothing, he treats whatever comes to his hand, or rather whatever interests him, with perfect composure; with perfect sincerity—the infallible sign of the true artist, as of the true poet. He will not affect a shame or a repugnance he does not feel when, like a surgeon, curious and impassive, he deals with a subject. Only the specialist will sympathise with, or approve of, this impartiality for, this indifference to, what we call disagreeable or agreeable. I confess Italian hardihood is always a surprise, and one is induced to think the race lacks *delicacy* in things moral and physical. Italian insensibility to smell, for instance; Italian indifference to that disgusting display of *viscera* which adds to the sanguinary horror of the butchers' shops of Rome—shock the more fastidious sense of the colder North. As to the sense of smell, one must think that the nasal nerve is more robust in the Italian. That organ does not sniff the offence in the way, nor nose the rat on the stairs, nor the corpse behind the arras. The Italian ignores villainous odours. Yet extreme sensibility to all that is most delicious in nature is shown on many a page of d'Annunzio's prose. How often with him one is in a perpetual spring of new born scents, in a land where the very air becomes an accomplice to seduce the senses! and properly so, for Italy is also the land of heavenly odours, the land of flowery perfumes. Where, as in Italy, is the very air inebriating with orange blossoms, with roses, with laurel-bloom sweeter than honey? Hazlitt boldly said that he preferred Italian dirt to Dutch cleanliness; thinking decay and corruption signs of the richer life: the compost of it in Italy feeding, as it does, a deeper vegetation, and, as some think, a richer humanity. The Italian accepts it all; is used to it; the foreigner, with the quicker sense, revolts at it.

We wonder that a writer of the highest artistic gifts deals with
The Yellow Book—Vol. XI. s diseased

diseased and degenerate types, showing the same fervour and interest that he does when he deals with health and beauty. Under the pretext of science or truth, he serves a bad turn to art ; he confounds beauty and the normal life with all life ; affects to be god-like, superior to matter, and handles the unclean and the clean, forgetting that the first business of the man and the artist is to discriminate between good and bad. The error of not choosing the better part will correct, or rather it has corrected itself, since the writer has turned from the romance of the street to the romance of the garden.

It is in d'Annunzio's new romance that we see his choice is determined by a higher ideal of life than in his former prose, that the things not nice of realism are abandoned, left buried with the *débris* of their day ; their corruption dooms them to be forgotten. Pestiferous literature has short lease of life. If one goes to *L'Innocente* and *Giovanni Episcopo* to learn more about d'Annunzio, one is in danger of taking his exuberant fiction for fact. They but show the rank "dressing" of his former days. Most readers stop at that, unmindful of, or without seeing, the perfect flowers of beauty grown out of it. It is true that the heroes of his earlier romances are not only slaves to animal functions, but they are more dangerous than animals : they are fatal to the very women they love ; they have the taint and the action of madness. They are not so aspiring as Milton's lion "pawing to get free his hinder parts" ; at the best they are but like dolphins showing their backs above the element they delight in ; they have no more moral sense than a water snake ; they have something of Borgia, of Cellini, of Aretino, of Casanova ; they are stiffening and repugnant to our sense of rectitude, for they illustrate not rectitude but excess. The experiences d'Annunzio has written of, with consummate gifts of expression, in *L'Innocente* and in *Giovanni Episcopo*, are usually

usually confined to clandestine books, and are seldom presented in literature, seldom invested with art, at least outside France and Italy. To match it you must go to that native of Roman Gaul, the satirist of Nero, who alone is rivalled by the later Pagan, feeling responsible not for the story he tells, but for how he tells it, and determined to tell it in all its details with unmitigated truth. He shows the utmost unconcern as to what you may think of it. You have the right to say you do not like his choice of subject.

When Goethe was reproached for the injurious effect his *Werther* had upon weak people, he said: "If there are mad people for whom reading is bad, I can't help it. The consequences do not concern me." The old Pagan felt himself to be like nature, working inevitably, in no way responsible for results, which are the individual's affair. So d'Annunzio writes with the conscience of an artist, but without the sensitiveness of a moralist; certainly without the restraints which regulate and sometimes silence expression when there is question of a personal experience which, as Hamlet says, it is not honest to set down in plain phrase. In Italy the matter is not so considered.

D'Annunzio's phrase as a prose writer is supple and opulent: his word is vivid; his feeling intense; he is always serious. He lacks playfulness. Without a sense of humour, seldom or never with the purpose of a humourist, without the sport of wit, he yet holds one fascinated by his word as he tells his tale; while he tells it he charms one with the music, the splendour, the colour and the grace of his language, and one wonders at the sustained flow and harmony of his periods. The secret of his style is that it is ever informed by an imaginative mind, shaped by a never failing sense of art. He seems denied lordship over laughter and tears. *That* belongs to the poet, and the dramatist, and the story-teller of simpler aims and humbler sympathies than the aristocratic and fastidious

fastidious artist. He is like a musician who writes—the melodious element prevails ; he is like a painter who paints—colour prevails ; he is like a worker in marble or metal—form prevails. He is a writer who, like George Sand, like Gautier, like Swinburne, has measureless power and a supreme sense of beauty to express his sense of life and art. Individual and intense, he looked isolated, like Baudelaire, with questionable tendencies and preferences. He seems to have escaped the abasement of the unclean, stained, but not transformed by the thing he worked in when dealing with the baser experiences of life.

While Baudelaire is close, severe, terse, d'Annunzio is open, pliant, and abundant. Now and again you get from his poetry a note, not disavowed, from Shakespeare, from Shelley, from Baudelaire, from Walt Whitman, from Tennyson. The Northern novelists have led him to treat of crime and punishment. With all these elements from the ferment of our modern moral and intellectual life, he has remained himself, a new talent, a personal talent, enriched, not dominated by others, maker and master of his own expression, renewing for us purely Italian types of life and art. Finally the poet has triumphed over the realist. It is in his later prose, and in his later verse, that he shows the inevitable change brought about by time and suffering. It holds a mystic element. He uses the Natural as the symbol of the Spiritual.

The poet is triumphant.

II

The poet has manifested himself more varied in style than the prose writer. He began with a sense of clean-cut classic form, objective, Pagan, unacquainted with the maladies of the introspective mind, and he produced masterpieces of Greek-like beauty
that

that at once raised him above the felicitous *dilettante* of classic art ; he turned from that, as from a thing accomplished, to reach after the refinements of the Provençal, and he attained at once in *l'Isottèu* an elegance, a lightness, a romantic charm, a laughing melody and grace of language, beyond anything of our time ; and last, in his *Poema Paradisiaco*, behold another transformation. The artificial, complicated, sensual poet of mediæval and renaissance gallantry is the suave, simple, *intime* poet of home affections—won back, as to a spring of pure water, after many and strange wanderings.

It is because of all this Protean and beautiful work that he is regarded as the first artist of Italy since '71. He is the new poet of his race, not of national aspiration or political aims, but of the eternal life of eternal Italy ; of what in it endures while Republics, Empires, Religion, come and go, or are transformed in that land of open sensuality, pagan from first to last, excessive in its passion of life and art, and rich and splendid in the expression of it all.

It is interesting to contrast the noble and unfortunate Leopardi, the poet of unappeased passion, of great memories, the proud poet of despair, with the new poet who has gratified every passion and slacked his thirst for every pleasure. Like Leopardi, the sombre lover of death, d'Annunzio, the poet of pleasure, exhausted and at the end of sensation, woos the pale mother of all woe and all peace. Proved to the uttermost, the intellectual life and the sensual life leave both men restless for the triumph of death ; and all this perilous stuff is worked off in expression, in fiction, in novels and verses, which are the *artist's* means of self-deliverance.

Leopardi moaned his anguish for the perishing individual doomed to an enforced renunciation ; moaned for his country, prostrate and enslaved, renewing no grandeur and quickening no heroism, till roused by his indignation, moved by his tears ; d'Annunzio,
more

more fortunate in his youth than the earlier poet, yet gave to sense what the other gave to mind, the strength and passion of his best years. With supple and jewelled phrase, with language expressive of every seduction of the senses, of every enchantment of beauty, he celebrates the burning pleasures of his youth, his pride of life, his passion for art. Both are pagan; the intellectual penetration of both men pitiless and unhesitating, sparing no illusion. The one is involved, profound, enwrapped, like Michael Angelo's *Night*, in a dolorous dream; the other, like some desperate alchemist, dissolves one by one the jewels of his youth, intent to test or sacrifice the very substance and quality of his being. How are we to understand two such poets? Are we to turn away from them as aliens, subject to tyrannies which we know not, or which we have resisted? Must we go to Clough and cold water, admit no acquaintance with flesh, escape dense life only to harass ourselves with introspective verse, which at best is but a proof of an active intellectual apparatus; or are we to step back to the chaste muse of our greater poets and rest with their simpler and more restrained expression? The age has to produce its own poetry. It is not enough that the gods and the demi-gods have lived. We must have the expression of our own life, and poetry is the first and final expression, the expression that survives. D'Annunzio's verse shows what it is for Italy in Italy to-day.

Christianised or Puritanised as we have been, the pagan element has only temporary possession with us. Though it has appeared allied with a music and an art not unworthy of the gravest as well as the lightest of Latin poets, serious with a studied and a premeditated sensuality, it has remained a thing more for hot-house Englishmen than for the out-of-door man who makes his race prevail, backed by the portentous matron who will none of the roses and languors of the foreigner.

The

The new pagan in Italy does not find himself in contradiction to his time and race when he sings of the raptures of youth and pleasure, unconscious of the stays and checks of our severer muse. His surrender to the life of the senses is complete. But however frantic his experience, he is serene and untroubled in his expression of it. The molten metal, the burning elements of his life, are cast into a shape of beauty which one must admire if one has a sense of form, a sense of art, and not merely that "sense of sin" which shadows life and dictates most criticism. No wonder we are so often found incapable of looking at a thing of art as a kind of deliverance and redemption from the grossness of matter.

The new poet has the advantage of the old moralist ; for in the very creation of art out of what the moralist must censure as experience, he makes something beautiful, which is his delight and consolation. He makes something that enchants us. Triumphant, he shows his Venus in marble, he shapes the god in clay.

The new poet, with his phosphorescent style, that at times suggests corruption and smells of it, comes with the curiosity of the *savant* and the emotion of the man ; he leaves no experience of life untried or at least unimagined. He follows a passion ; he sounds a motive ; absorbed, he seems all but criminal with the criminal. He shows the flux and reflux of life in human nature. If the great tide of it carries out or leaves stranded things that revolt and pain us, we, at least, can show our taste by not occupying ourselves with the more dreadful accidents of the hour and the more unsightly *débris* of the season. Yet, if that is there, there is much more in the prose of the poet.

The new pagan having read all literature, questioned all religions, used up his youth, has one thing left, one thing of great price, which the mere *débauché* has not known : he has the
consolations

consolations of art, and, with it, the higher worship of beauty. Art is his creation, and with that he enchants us and beguiles himself. When he treats of the sin of Moonlight and May, when he describes his "Venus of sweet waters" in the heat and mystery of the noonday, we are enchanted with beauty ; and we feel with him the trouble and ecstasy of youth. When he addresses his old nurse, or returns to his home and walks in the garden with his mother, or addresses his sister with words of touching sweetness, we learn that the sacred charities of the heart are known and felt. He is noble and patriotic when he pours out the rolling music of his funeral ode to the dead admiral. We recognise that he is master of every melody, and, if a pagan still, a pagan to whom the solemnities of life have come, and who gives himself to the experience appropriate to his years. But yesterday, living according to the law of his members, concerning himself, like the French novelists of the day, with the sensual side of life, with things of sight, and sound, and touch, and smell ; describing the experience, not of the soul or the mind, but of the flesh, and in no way ashamed of any condition of it in life or death. The Frenchman, the Italian, the Spaniard, in a word, the Latin, studies a corpse, paints it, or a nude living body, curious of form ; and for that he is as constant as we are for the domesticities of life. Imagine the different results in art.

Both from Baudelaire and from d'Annunzio we get the *de profundis* like a far-off note, recalling the pains and anxieties of the opium eater. The frenzies of passion that lead the heroes of his romances to murder or suicide, in the poet himself evoke a cry of despair. The ever reappearing paganism of youth gives place to the spiritualism of the new man, born out of suffering, and we hear the cry of a living soul after the confessions of the sensualist. It is this evolution which separates d'Annunzio from the objective

tive and pagan artists of the Italian renaissance like Poliziano, for example, close as he seems to him by his serene plastic sense ; it is this which attaches him to Petrarch and Tasso, in his later verse ; still a pagan, yet with sorrow, and all her family of sighs and tears, become conscious that the life of the senses is not the be-all and end-all of existence. The new pagan is touched by something he cannot define, something that escapes *form*, yet permeates it. So d'Annunzio becomes in poetry what Chopin is in music, a "sovereign master of every melody." With the refinement of a Provençal, with the serenity of a Greek, he sang of delightful romantic and classic things, of gardens and *fêtes*, and all that belongs to the life of elegance.

He has a sixteenth-century face, like a portrait by Clouet : fine, sensitive, intense ; implying close acquaintance with the uncommon. Like a later Leonardo, he is a lover of the beautiful hands of women ; like him, he is learned in the mysteries of their touch ; like him, he is a student of their smile ; no grace or seduction of their being is lost upon him. Like the painter of the *Sacred and Profane Love*, he illustrates the beauty, he expresses the significance, of flesh. But little past thirty, his productiveness during the last twelve or thirteen years is remarkable. He began with a thin volume of verse : *Intermezzo in rime* ; then wrote *Il Piacere* in prose ; then in verse *l'Isottèo* ; *La Chimera* ; *Elegie Romane* ; *Odi Navali* ; *Poema Paradisiaco*. Without mentioning all his prose romances, brilliant as they are in many respects, and foreign to English taste, the most acceptable is the last one : "the golden book of spirit and sense," the *Tre Vergine delle Rocce*.

The Darkened Room

By Elsie Higginbotham

OUTSIDE the blind, the world lives on ;
A world of mingled green and white—
The blackbird sings—no sweetness gone
From tones, last year, your chief delight ;
And yet, dear heart, that cadence sad,
In last year's notes no utterance had.

This side the blind, the world stands still ;
A world grown dumb, since yesterday ;
No hope of joy—no dread of ill,
Remains, to mar a peace whose sway,
Seems strangest, where, upon their shelves,
In dust, your books enshroud themselves.

Outside the blind, feet pass along ;
I hear a man's voice blithe and kind,
From speaking change to joyous song—
I hear, and shrink, this side the blind
But you stir not ; so fast you sleep,
I dare to kiss your brow and weep.

Three Pictures

By Patten Wilson

I. The War Horses of Rustem

II. A Phantasy

III. So the wind drove us on to the cavern
of gloom
Where we fell in the toils of the foul
sea-snake;
Their scaly folds drew us on to our
doom.
Pray for us, stranger, for Christ's sweet
sake.







A Marriage

By Ella D'Arcy

I

IN the upstairs room of a City restaurant two young men were finishing their luncheon. They had taken the corner table by the window, and as it was past two o'clock the room was fairly empty. There being no one at either of the tables next them, they could talk at their ease.

West, the elder of the two, was just lighting a cigarette. The other, Catterson, who, in spite of a thin moustache, looked little more than a boy, had ordered a cup of black coffee. When even a younger man than he was at present, he had passed a couple of years in Paris, and he continued, by the manner in which he wore his hair, by his taste in neckties, and by his preferences in food and drink, to pay Frenchmen the sincerest flattery that was in his power.

But to-day he let the coffee stand before him untasted. His young forehead was pushed up into horizontal lines, his full-lipped mouth was slightly open with anxious, suspended breath. He gazed away, through the red velvet lounges, through the gilt-framed mirrors, to the distant object of his thought.

West, leaning back in his seat, emitting arabesques and spirals
of

of brown-grey smoke, watched him with interest rather than with sympathy, and could not repress a smile when Catterson, coming abruptly out of dreamland, turned towards him, to say: "You see, if it were only for the child's sake, I feel I ought to marry her, and the next may be a boy. I should like him to inherit the little property, small as it is. And I've no power to will it."

His voice was half decided, wholly interrogative, and West smiled. There had been a moment in all their conversations of the last six weeks, when some such remark from Catterson was sure to fall. Experience enabled West to anticipate its arrival, and he smiled to find his anticipation so accurately fulfilled.

"My dear chap, I see you're going to do it," he answered, "so it's useless for me to protest any more. But I'll just remind you of an old dictum, which, maybe, you'll respect, because it's in French: '*Ne faites jamais de votre maîtresse, votre femme.*'"

West spoke lightly, uttering the quotation just because it happened to flash through his mind; but all the same, it was a fixed idea of his, that if you married a girl of "that sort," she was sure to discover, sooner or later, colossal vices; she was sure to kick over the traces, to take to drink, or to some other form of dissipation.

Catterson shrugged his shoulders, flushed, and frowned; then recovered his temper, and began again, stammeringly, tumultuously, his words tripping over one another in their haste. He always stammered a little in moments of emotion.

"But you d-don't know Nettie. She's not at all—s-she's quite different from what you think. Until she had the misfortune to meet with me, she was as good a girl as you could find."

"No, I don't know her, I admit," observed West, and smoked in silence.

"I have been thinking," Catterson said presently, "that I should
like

like you to come down to see her. I should like you to make her acquaintance, because then I am sure you would agree I am right. I do want to have your support and approval, you know."

West smiled again. It amused him to note the anxiety Catterson exhibited for his approval and support, yet he knew all the time that the young man was bent on marrying Nettie Hooper in spite of anything he could say.

But he understood the springs of the apparent contradiction. He understood Catterson fairly well, without being fond of him. They had been schoolmates. Chance lately, rather than choice on West's side, had again thrown them together; now the luncheon hour saw them in almost daily companionship. And, correcting his earlier impressions of the impulsive, sensitive, volatile little boy by these more recent ones, he read Catterson's as a weak, amiable, and affectionate nature; he saw him always anxious to stand well with his associates, to be liked and looked up to by his little world. To do as others do, was his ruling passion; what Brown, Jones, and Robinson might say of him, his first consideration. It was because at one time Robinson, Jones, and Brown had been represented for him by a circle of gay young Frenchmen that he had thought it incumbent upon him, when opportunity offered, to tread in their footsteps. It was because he found his path set now within the respectable circles of British middle-class society, that his anomalous position was becoming a burden; that the double personality of married man and father in his riverside lodgings, of eligible bachelor in the drawing-rooms of Bayswater and Maida Vale, grew daily more intolerable to sustain. He could think of no easier way out of the dilemma than to make Nettie his wife, and let the news gradually leak out, that he had been married for the last two years.

Some

Some of his arguments in favour of the marriage—and he required many arguments to outweigh his consciousness of the *mésalliance*—were that, for all practical purposes, he was as good as married already. He could never give Nettie up; he must always provide for her and the child as long as he lived. And his present mode of life was full of inconveniences. He was living at Teddington under an assumed name, and it is not at all pleasant to live under an assumed name. At any moment one may be discovered, and an awkward situation may result.

These were some of his arguments. But then, too, he had developed the domestic affections to a surprising degree, and if his first passion for Nettie were somewhat assuaged, he had a much more tender feeling for her now than in the beginning. And he was devoted to his little daughter; a devotion which a few months ago he would have sworn he was incapable of feeling for any so uninteresting an animal as a baby. He reproached himself bitterly for having placed her at such a disadvantage in life as illegitimacy entails; he felt that he ought at least to give the expected child all the rights which a legal recognition can confer.

His chief argument, however, was that he had sinned, and that in marriage lay the only reparation; and let a man persuade himself that a certain course of action is the one righteous, the one honourable course to take—more particularly if it jumps with his own private inclinations—and nothing can deter him from it.

“Not even French proverbs,” laughed West into his beard.

“Come down and see her,” Catterson urged, and West, moved by a natural curiosity, as well as by a desire to oblige his friend, agreed to meet him that evening at Waterloo, that they might go down together.

His soul being eased through confession, Catterson regained at once the buoyant good spirits which were natural to him, but
which,

which, of late, secret anxieties and perturbation of mind had overshadowed completely. For when depressed he touched deeper depths of depression than his neighbour, in exact proportion to the unusual height and breadth of his gaiety in his moments of elation.

Now he enlivened the journey out from town, by cascades of exuberant talk, filling up the infrequent pauses with snatches of love-songs: the music-hall love-songs of the day.

Yet as the train approached Teddington, he fell into silence again. A new anxiety began to dominate him: the anxiety that West should be favourably impressed by Nettie Hooper. His manner became more nervous, his stammer increased; a red spot burned on either cheek. He could not keep his thoughts or his speech from the coming interview.

"She doesn't talk much," he explained, as they walked along the summer sunset roads; "she's very shy; but you mustn't on that account imagine she's not glad to see you. She's very much interested in you. She wants to meet you very much."

"Of course she's not what's called a lady," he began again; "her people don't count at all. She, herself, wants to drop them. But you would never discover she wasn't one. She has a perfect accent, a perfect pronunciation. And she is so wonderfully modest and refined. I assure you, I've known very few real ladies to compare to her."

He eulogised her economy, her good management. "My money goes twice as far since she has had the spending of it. She's so clever, and you can't think how well she cooks. She has learned it from the old lady with whom we lodge. Mrs. Baker is devoted to Nettie, would do anything for her, thinks there's no one like her in the world. And then she makes all her own clothes, and is better dressed than any girl I see, although they only cost her a few shillings."

He sang the praises of her sweetness, of her gentleness, of her domesticity. "She's so absolutely unselfish; such a devoted mother to our little girl; and yet, she's scarcely more than a child herself. She won't be nineteen till next April."

All which encomiums and dozens more wearied West's ear, without giving him any clear conception of their subject. He was thankful when Catterson suddenly broke off with, "Here we are, this is Rose Cottage."

West saw the usual, creeper-covered, French-windowed, sham-romantic, and wholly dilapidated little villa, which realises the ideal of all young lovers for a first nest. To more prosaic minds, it suggested earwigs and spiders in summer, loose tiles and burst pipes in winter, and general dampness and discomfort all the year round.

It stood separated from the road by a piece of front garden, in which the uncut grass waved fairy spear-heads, and the unpruned bushes matted out so wide and thick, as to screen off completely the sitting-room from the passers-by.

The narrow gravel path leading up to the door was painted with mosses, the little trellis-work porch was giving way beneath the weight of vine-wood and rose-stem which lay heavy upon it; the virginia-creeper over the window-top swayed down to the ground in graceful diminishing tresses; the bedroom windows above blinked tiny eyes beneath heavy eyelids of greenery. An auctioneer would have described the place as a bijou bower of verdure, and West's sense of humour was tickled by the thoroughly conventional background it provided for the conventional *solitude à deux*.

Catterson rang that he might give notice of West's arrival, and a thin bell responded to his pull from the interior of the house. It was succeeded by the tapping of high heels along the oilcloth,
the

the door opened, and a very little woman, in a dark woollen gown, stood within the threshold.

The nurse, the landlady, the servant, perhaps? West told himself that *this* could not be Nettie Hooper, this plain little creature, who was surely so much older than the girl Catterson had described.

But the next instant Catterson said, "Nettie, this is my great friend, West," and the little woman had given him a lifeless hand, while she welcomed him in curious, drawling tones, "I'm so glad to see you ; Jack is always talking about you ; do come in."

He was certain she was plain, but he had no time to localise her plainness—to decide whether it lay in feature, complexion, or expression, for her back was towards him ; he was following her into the sitting-room, and he looked down upon a dark head of hair, a meagre figure, a dowdy home-made gown.

"I hope you've got a good dinner for us," Catterson began at once, stammering over every consonant. "I don't know how West may be feeling, but I'm uncommonly hungry myself."

"You didn't give me much time," she answered ; "your wire only came at four. I've got you some fish, and a steak."

"And a salad? good! Nettie's steaks are ripping, West, you'll see."

"Oh, but Mrs. Baker is going to cook the dinner to-night ; I didn't think you'd wish me to leave you and Mr. West, like that."

During these not very illuminating remarks, West was revising his first impressions. He confessed that the girl had nice features, regular, well-proportioned ; that, though she lacked colour, her complexion was of a healthy paleness ; that her expression could hardly be called disagreeable, for the difficulty lay in deciding whether she had any expression at all. All the same, she was plain ; flat-chested, undeveloped, with clumsy feet and hands.

"You

"You have a—quiet little place here," he said to her to make conversation. He had been going to say "a charming, little place," but a glance round the dark, musty-smelling room was too much for his powers of unvaracity.

"Yes, it's almost too quiet, while Jack is away. Don't you think, Mr. West, I'm very good to stay here by myself all day long?"

She had the oddest voice, very drawling, measured, inanimate. It said nothing at all to the listener beyond the mere actual words.

"Come, you've got baby," said Catterson, laughing, "let alone Mrs. Baker."

"As though one's landlady and a baby of seventeen months were all the companionship one could require!" She laughed too.

She was almost pretty when she laughed, and West began to perceive that after all she might be no older than Catterson had said. She had the abundant crisp-growing hair, the irreproachable smoothness of skin found only in youth's company. Her eyes were really remarkable eyes, large, of a bluish-grey, clear as water, with the pupils very big.

Yes, she was exceedingly pretty. It took you some time to see it perhaps, but once you had seen it you wondered you could have overlooked it before. Yet West had no sooner admitted the fact than he began to qualify it. He said there was absolutely nothing in her face that appealed to your imagination; that such very limpid eyes go with a cold or a shallow nature, that such very large pupils denote either want of intelligence or want of strength.

And there was undeniably something common in her physiognomy, though at first he could not decide in which particular trait it lay. Was it in the cut of the nostril, the line of the mouth? No, he thought it was to be found, rather, in a
certain

certain displeasing shininess of surface. Her cheek had less of the velvety texture of the peach, than the glaze of the white-heart cherry. The wings of the nose, its slightly aquiline bridge, reflected the light in little patches.

If her hair was unusually thick, it was coarse too, and of a uniform dark-brown colour. The front, cut short, seemed to rebel against the artificial curling to which it was subjected. Instead of lying on her forehead in rings as was no doubt intended, here was an undistinguishable fuzz, while there a straight mesh stood out defiantly.

She had pretty ears and execrably ugly hands, in the thick fingers of which, with squat nails broader than they were long, in the tough and wrinkled skin, the want of race of her ancestors was easily to be read. On the left hand she wore a plain gold ring.

So soon as the first fillip of greeting was spent, she became noticeable for her silences; had a way of letting every subject drop; and expressed no opinions, or only those universal ones which every woman may express without danger of self-revelation. For instance, when West asked whether she cared for reading, she said she was passionately fond of it; but when pressed as to what she liked best to read, she mentioned, after considerable hesitation, *East Lynne* and *Shakespeare*.

As Catterson had said, there was no fault to find with her pronunciation or her accent; or what faults there were, were faults he himself was guilty of. West realised that she was quick in imitation, and, up to a certain point, receptive. She had carefully modelled her deportment on Catterson's, held her knife and fork, lifted her glass, and used her table-napkin in precisely the same way he did. When, later on, West had occasion to see her handwriting he found it a curiously close copy of Catterson's own.

Women,

Women, whose characters are still undeveloped, and whose writing therefore remains unformed, almost invariably do adopt, for a time, the handwriting of their lovers.

There was nothing in her manners or appearance, to indicate her precise social origin, nor did West, by-the-by, ever learn anything definite concerning it. Catterson was very sensitive on the point, and only once made the vaguest, the most cursory reference to how he had met her.

Still less was there anything about Nettie Hooper to fit in with West's preconceived theories. As she sat there, placid, silent, quiet, he had to admit that as Catterson had said, she was not at all the sort of girl he had imagined her to be. And yet

He made the above mental notes during the course of the dinner, while Catterson's nervousness gradually wore off, and his gaiety returned. His infatuation for Nettie, led him, when in her presence, to the conviction that every one else must be equally infatuated too.

The dining-room was small, and like the parlour looked out through a French window over a tangled slip of garden. The furniture consisted chiefly of Japanese fans, but there was also a round table, and at least three chairs. The arrangements, generally, were of a picnic character, and when Mrs. Baker, a stout and loquacious old body, brought in the dishes, she stayed awhile to join in the conversation, addressing them all impartially as "My dear," and Nettie in particular as "My dear Life."

But the meal if simple, was satisfying, and Nettie herself left the table to make the coffee, as Catterson had taught her to do, in French fashion. He brought out from the chiffoniere a bottle of green Chartreuse, and Nettie handed cigarettes and found an ash-tray. She was full of ministering attentions.

While they smoked and talked, and she sat silent, her limpid
eyes

eyes fixed mostly on Catterson, although every now and then, West knew they were turned upon him, wails were heard from upstairs.

"It's baby, poor little soul," said Nettie, rising. "Please, Jack, may I go and bring her down?"

She presently returned with a flannel-gowned infant in her arms. The child had just the same large, limpid, blue-grey eyes as the mother, with just the same look in them. She fixed West with the relentless, unswerving stare of childhood, and not all her father's blandishments could extract a smile.

Nettie, kissing the square-toed, pink feet, addressed her as "Blossom," and "Dear little soul," then sat tranquilly nursing her, as a child might nurse a doll.

She had really many of a child's ways, and when Catterson, at the end of the evening, put on his hat to accompany West to the station, she asked in her long, plaintive drawl, "May I come, too, Jack?" exactly as a child asks permission of parent or master. She put her head back again into the dining-room a moment after leaving it. "What shall I put on, my cloak or my cape?" she said; "and must I change my shoes?"

Catterson turned to West with a smile, which asked for congratulations. "You see how docile she is, how gentle? And it's always the same. It's always my wishes that guide her. She never does anything without asking my opinion and advice. I don't know how a man could have a better wife. I know I should never find one to suit me better. But now you've seen her for yourself, you've come over to my opinion, I feel sure? You've got nothing further to urge against my marrying her, have you?"

West was saved the embarrassment of a reply by the reappearance of Nettie in outdoor things, and Catterson was too satisfied
in

in his own mind with the effect she must have produced, to notice the omission.

He talked gaily on indifferent matters until the train moved out of the station, and West carried away with him a final vignette of the two young people standing close together beneath the glare of a gas-lamp, Catterson with an arm affectionately slipped through the girl's. His thin, handsome face was flushed with excitement and self-content. The demure little figure beside him, that did not reach up to his shoulder, in neat black coat and toque, stared across the platform up to West, from limpid, most curious eyes.

What the devil was the peculiarity of those eyes, he asked himself impatiently? and hammered out the answer to the oscillations of the carriage, the vibration of the woodwork, the flicker of the lamp, as the train rumbled through the night and jerked up at flaring stations.

Beautiful as to shape and colour, beautiful in their fine dark lashes, in their thinly pencilled brows, these strange eyes seemed to look at you and ostentatiously to keep silence; to thrust you coldly back, to gaze through you and beyond you, as if with the set purpose of avoiding any explanation with your own.

It was this singularity which in the shock of first sight had repelled, which had shed over the face an illusory plainness, which had suggested age and experience, so that it had taken West an appreciable time to discover that Nettie Hooper was in reality quite young, and exceedingly pretty. But he had learned on a dozen previous occasions, that the first instantaneous, unbiased impression is the one to be trusted. Especially in so far as concerns the eyes. The eyes are very literally the windows of the soul.

II

Three years later, West and two men who don't come into this story at all, were spending the month of August up the river. An ill-advised proceeding, for the weather, so far, had proved deplorably wet, as the weather in August too often does, and of all sad places in wet weather, the river is incomparably the saddest.

But they had hired their boat, they had made their arrangements, dates were fixed, and places decided on. With the thoroughly British mental twist that to change your plans is to show inconsistency, and therefore weakness, West's companions were determined to carry these plans out to their prearranged end.

He scoffed at their mulishness, but submitted nevertheless ; and following their example he rowed with bent head and set teeth through the continually falling rain, or sat, in their society during interminable hours waiting for it to cease, in an open boat beneath a dripping elm-tree. And as he gazed out over the leaden sheet of pock-marked water, he found amusement in telling himself that here at least was a typically national way of taking a holiday.

Nor, after all, did it always rain. There were occasional days of brilliant, if unstable sunshine, when the stream ran dimpling between its banks of sweet flag and loose-strife ; when the sand-martins skimmed over the water with their pittering cry ; when the dabchick, as the boat stole upon her, dived so suddenly, remained under for so long, and rose again so far off, that but for a knowledge of her habits, you would pronounce it a genuine case of bird suicide.

It was on one such a sunny, inspiring Saturday, that a twenty
mile

mile pull from Maidenhead brought them by afternoon in sight of the picturesque old bridge at Sonning. Here, in Sonning, they were to pass the night and stay over till Monday. For here one of the men had an aunt, and he was under strict maternal orders to dine with her on Sunday.

There was the usual difference of opinion as to which of the two inns they should put up at, the White Hart being voted too noisy, the French Horn condemned as too swagger. But the question was settled by the White Hart, which you reach first on the Berkshire bank, proving full; they accordingly pulled round the mill-water on the right, to try their luck at the French Horn.

For those who do not know it, this may be described as one of the prettiest of riverside inns; a cosy-looking, two-storied house, with a wide verandah, and a lawn sloping down to the water's edge. Beneath the trees on either side, tea was set out on wicker tea-tables, and each table had its encircling group of gay frocks and scarlet sunshades. It presented a Watteau-like picture of light and shadow and colour, the artistic value of which was increased by three conspicuous figures, which took the spectator's eye straight to the centre of the foreground.

A man, a girl, and a little child stood together, just above the wooden landing-steps, and a Canadian canoe, brilliant with newness and varnish, flaring with flame-coloured cushions, rocked gently on the water at their feet.

The young man held the painter in his hand; was dressed in immaculate white flannel, wore a pink and white striped shirt, and a waist-handkerchief of crimson silk.

The girl was the boating-girl of the stage. Where the rushes fringed the lawn you looked instinctively for footlights. The open-work silk stockings, the patent leather evening shoes, the silver belt

belt compressing a waist of seventeen inches, were all so thoroughly theatrical. So was her costume of pale blue and white ; so was the knot of broad ribbon fastening her sailor collar ; so was the Jack Tar cap, with its blue and silver binding, set slightly on one side of her dark head. The child by her side was dressed in white embroidered muslin and a sun-bonnet.

"I say, West," cried the man who steered, "you who know all the actresses, tell us who's that little girl there, with the kid."

West, who was sculling, turned his head.

"Oh, damn ! it's Mrs. Catterson," he said, with the emphasis of a surprise, which is a disagreeable one.

Since the marriage, he had not seen very much of Nettie Catterson, although he was godfather to the boy. For one thing, it is difficult to see much of people who live in the suburbs ; and though Catterson had moved twice, first from Teddington to Kingston, then from Kingston to Surbiton Hill, where he was now a householder, Surbiton remained equally out of West's way.

But there was another reason for his evasion of the constant invitations which Catterson pressed upon him in the City. It had not taken him long to perceive that he was far from being *persona grata* to Mrs. Catterson. Whether this was to be accounted for by the average woman's inevitable jealousy of her husband's friends, whether it was she suspected his opposition to her marriage, or whether she could not forgive him for having known her while she was passing as Mrs. Grey, he could not determine. Probably her dislike was compounded of all three reasons, with a preponderance, he thought, in favour of the last.

For with marriage, the possession of a semi-detached villa at Surbiton, and the entrance into such society as a visit from the clergyman's wife may open the door to, Nettie had become of an amazing conventionality, and surpassing Catterson himself
in

in the matter of deference to Mrs. Grundy, she seemed to have set herself the task of atoning for irregularity of conduct in the past, by the severest reprobation of all who erred in the present, and West's ribaldry in conversation, his light views on serious subjects, and his habitual desecration of the Sunday were themes for her constant animadversions and displeasure.

It was the rapid *résumé* of these, his demerits with Mrs. Catterson, which had called forth his energetic "Damn !"

At the same moment that he recognised her, Catterson recognised him, and sung out a welcome. The boat was brought alongside, and he was received by Nettie with a warmth which surprised him. His companions, with hasty cap-lifting, escaped across the lawn to get drinks at the bar, and secure beds for the night.

He looked after them with envy ; and had to accept Nettie's invitation to tea.

"We were just quarrelling, Jack and I," she said, "where to have it. He wants to go down to Marlow, and I want it here. Now you've come, that settles it. We'll have it here."

Catterson explained his reason : as Nettie wished to go out in the canoe again, they ought to go now while it was fine, as it was sure to rain later.

Nettie denied the possibility of rain with an asperity which informed West that he had arrived on the crest of a domestic disagreement, and he understood at once the cordiality of his reception.

She had developed none of the tempestuous views which his theories had required ; on the contrary she appeared to be just the ordinary wife, with the ordinary contempt for her husband's foibles and wishes. She could talk of the trials of housekeeping and the iniquities of servants as to the manner born, and always
imitative

imitative had lately given back the ideals of Surbiton with the fidelity of a mirror. But there were curious undercurrents beneath this surface smoothness, of which West now and then got an indication.

He renewed his acquaintance with Gladys, the little girl, who periodically forgot him, and asked after his godson. But the subject proved unfortunate.

Nettie's mouth took menacing lines. "Cyril, I'm sorry to say, is a very naughty boy. I don't know what we're going to do with him, I'm sure."

West couldn't help smiling. "It's somewhat early days to despair of his ultimate improvement, perhaps? How old is he? Not three till December, I think?" He told himself that the open-hearted, sensitive, impulsive little fellow ought not to be very difficult to manage.

"He's old enough to be made to obey," she said, with a glance at Catterson, which suggested some contentious background to the remark.

"Oh, well, one doesn't want to break the child's spirit," Catterson protested.

"I think his spirit will have to be broken very soon," asserted Nettie, "if he goes on being as troublesome as he has been lately."

Gladys, sitting by her mother's side, drank in everything that was said. She was now five years old, and a little miniature of Nettie. She turned her clear and stolid eyes from one to another.

"Cyril's a naughty little boy," she observed in a piping drawl, a thin exaggeration of Nettie's own, and making impressive pauses between the words. "He's never going to be tooked up the river like me. Is he, mother?"

"If you want to be a good little girl," observed Catterson, "you'll

"you'll put your bread and jam into your mouth, instead of feeding your ear with it as you are doing at present."

"Cyril don't have . . . no jam . . . for *his* tea," she began again, "'cos he's so naughty. He only has dry bread an'——"

"Come, come, don't talk so much, Gladys," said her father impatiently, "or perhaps you won't get 'tooked' up the river again either."

Nettie put an arm round her.

"Poor little soul! Mother'll take her up the river always, won't she? We don't mind what Papa says, do we?"

"Silly old Papa!" cried the child, throwing him one of Nettie's own looks, "we don't mind what he says, we don't."

All the same, when tea was over, and they prepared to make a start in the canoe, West their still somewhat unwilling guest, Catterson put his foot down and refused to take Gladys with them for various reasons. Four couldn't get into the canoe with safety or comfort; the child had been out all day, and had already complained of sickness from the constant swaying motion; but chiefly because it was undoubtedly going to rain. Nettie gave in with a bad grace, and the little girl was led off, roaring, by her maid.

Nettie had complained that the tea was cold, and that she could not drink it. She had insisted on Catterson having a second brew brought. Then when this came had pushed away her cup, and pronounced it as unpalatable as before. But no sooner were they some way down stream, than she said she was thirsty, and asked for ginger beer.

West remembered Catterson telling him long ago, how Nettie would suddenly wake up thirsty in the middle of the night, and how he would have to get up and go down to forage for something to quench her thirst. It had seemed to Catterson, in those

those days, very amusing, pathetic, and childlike, and he had told of it with evident relish and pride. But the little perversity which is so attractively provoking in the young girl, often comes to provoke without any attractiveness in the wife and mother.

Catterson turned the canoe when Nettie spoke, saying they had best go and get what she wanted at the White Hart, but West fancied he looked annoyed and slightly ashamed.

After this little episode, because of the ominous appearance of the sky, it was agreed to keep up stream towards the lock. But before they reached it the first great drops of rain were splashing into the water about them. The lock-keeper made them welcome. He and Catterson were old acquaintances. Having set out for them, and dusted down three Windsor chairs, he went to spread a tarpaulin over the canoe.

The darkness of the little room grew deeper every instant. Then came an illuminating flash followed by a shattering thunder-peal. The ear was filled with the impetuous downrush of the rain.

"There! Why wouldn't you let me bring Gladys?" cried Nettie. "Poor little soul, she's so terrified of thunder, she'll scream herself into fits."

"She's right enough with Annie," said Catterson, somewhat too confidently.

Nettie replied that Annie was a perfect fool, more afraid of a storm than the child herself. "Jack, you'll have to go back and comfort her. Jack, you *must* go!"

"My dear, in this rain!" he expostulated. "How can you want me to do anything so mad?"

But Nettie had worked herself up into a paroxysm of maternal solicitude, of anguish of mind. West asked himself if it were entirely genuine, or partly a means of punishing Catterson for his self-assertion a while ago.

"Since

"Since you're so afraid of a little rain," she concluded contemptuously, "I'll go myself. I'm not going to let the child die in hysterics."

She made a movement as though to leave the house. Catterson drew her back, and turning up the collar of his coat, went out. But before the canoe was fairly launched, West knew he must be wet to the skin. He stood and watched him paddling down against the closely serried, glittering lances of the rain, until lost in a haze of watery grey.

Then, for his life, he could not refrain from speaking. "I think it's very unwise for Jack to get wet like that. It's not as though he were particularly strong. He comes of a delicate, short-lived family, as you probably know?"

But Nettie only stared silently before her as though she had not heard.

And there, in silence, they remained for another twenty minutes, while the rain flooded earth and river, and the thunder rumbled to and fro over the sky.

Nettie maintained an absolute silence, and West, leaning against the window-frame, beguiled the time in studying her with fleeting, inoffensive glances. He again noted the ugliness of her hands, to which, as they lay folded in her lap, the flashing of a half-hoop of fine diamonds, now worn above the wedding-ring, carried first his attention. But when he raised his eyes to her small, pale face, he decided she was prettier than she used to be, more strikingly pretty at first sight. She had learned, perhaps, to bring out her better points. He thought she dressed her hair more becomingly; three years steady application of curling irons had at last induced it to lie in softer curls. Five years of married life had in no wise dimmed the transparency of her skin. Not a line recorded an emotion whether of pleasure or of pain. If she
had

had lived through any psychic experiences, they had not left the faintest mark behind. And it was partly the immobility of countenance by which this smoothness of surface was maintained, which led West again to qualify his favourable verdict, just as he had done before.

He began to think that the predominant note in her character was coldness, heartlessness even. He remembered, not so long ago, hearing her relate as though it were a good story, how meeting old Mrs. Baker one day in Kingston Market, she had passed her by with an unrecognising stare. Yet the old woman had been devoted to Nettie, as she herself used to boast; a certain feeling of gratitude, of kindness might have been looked for in return.

But there must have been others, West told himself, to whom she owed a greater debt—the relations, or friends, who had brought her up, clothed her and fed her until the day she had met with Catterson. She never referred to these others, she never let slip the smallest allusion to her early life; she held her secrets with a tenacity which was really uncommon; but it was evident that she had turned her back on all who had ever befriended her with the same cold ease she had shown to Mrs. Baker.

She was fond, apparently, of her little girl, but this particular affection was no contradiction to her general want of it; she saw in the child a reduplication of herself. For Gladys was the image of her mother, just as the little boy was Catterson over again; very nervous, sensitive, and eager for love and approval.

West mused over the curious want of sympathy Nettie had always displayed for the boy. It amounted almost to dislike. He had never been able to win her good word from the day of his birth, and his natural timidity was greatly augmented by her

severe treatment. West was inclined to believe the reason to be a sort of jealousy for Gladys ; that she resented the fact that Cyril was legitimate ; that he would inherit under his grandfather's will, while the little girl, the first born, the preferred child, could not.

Catterson had never alluded to the subject, but for all that, West knew that he was profoundly hurt by the difference Nettie made between the children. If he himself made any in his heart, and West said it would be only natural if he loved Cyril most, who adored his father and impulsively showed it, rather than Gladys who always coldly repulsed his overtures of affection, at least in his conduct towards them he never let it appear. He even seemed to overlook Cyril a little, having learned by experience probably, what were the consequences of paying him too much attention. Cyril was always left at home, while Gladys accompanied her parents everywhere.

Studying Nettie's physiognomy, tracing the lines of the mouth, the slightly backward drawn nostrils, the hard insensitive hands, West found himself rejoicing he did not stand in his poor little godson's shoes.

The storm was over, the sun was out again, and Nettie rising, suggested they should go. They crossed over the top of the lock-gates, picked their way between the puddles of the towing-path, and so back over Sonning Bridge to the hotel.

Catterson was in his room changing his wet clothes, and Nettie went up to him. West found Gladys sitting in the verandah beside her nurse, tranquilly playing with a doll.

"Well, babe," said he, in friendly tones, "were you very much frightened by the thunder and lightning, just now?"

But she did not answer, she merely fixed her limpid eyes on his, thrusting him back with their coldly negative stare. Then, ostentatiously, she re-absorbed herself in her game.

The

The next morning kept Catterson in bed with a bad cold and West sooner than pass the day in the vicinity of Nettie, persuaded the nephew to abandon the aunt and the dinner, and both men into the extraordinary inconsistency of pushing on to Streatley.

III

One black morning in December, West remembered, for no reason at all, that it was the birthday of Cyril his godson. Cyril to-day entered on his fifth year, and West found himself making the usual "damned silly reflections" on the flight of time. Dismissing these as stale and unprofitable, he began to wonder what present he could take the boy. He tried to remember what he himself had liked at the age of four, but he could recall nothing of that antediluvian period. He thought of a book, a paint-box, a white fur rabbit, but the delights of painting and reading were surely beyond Cyril's years, while the Bunny was perhaps too infantile. Finally, he set his face westward, trusting to find inspiration in the windows of the shops he passed. The heavenly smell of chocolate which greeted him at Buszard's made him decide on a big packet of bon-bons. He knew from previous experience with the Catterson children, that chocolates were sure to be appreciated.

The Cimmerian morning had dragged its course through brown, orange, and yellow hours, to an afternoon of misty grey. But West nevertheless felt inclined for walking. As he crossed the park diagonally from the Marble Arch to Queen's Gate, his thoughts outran his steps, and were already with the Cattersons.

They had moved again, and now lived in South Kensington.

Nettie

Nettie had become very intimate with a certain Mrs. Reade, whose acquaintance she owed to a week spent in the same hotel. The two young women had struck up an effusive friendship, based on a similarity of taste in dress and amusement, Mrs. Reade supplying the model for Nettie's faithful imitation. She copied her manners, she adopted her opinions and ideas. Mrs. Reade had declared it was impossible to live so far out of town as Surbiton. The Cattersons therefore disposed of the lease of their house, and took one close to Mrs. Reade's in Astwood Place.

Catterson had left his pretty suburban garden with the more reluctance that he disliked the Reades, considered the husband common, the wife loud, vulgar, bad style. But he had told West at the time, there was no price too high to pay for the purchase of domestic peace.

He was peaceably inclined by nature, but of late, any nervous energy which might have been contentiously employed was used up in fighting off the various trifling ailments that continuously beset him. He was always taking cold; now it was lumbago, now a touch of congestion, now a touch of pleurisy. He spent half his days at home in the doctor's hands. Nettie made his bad health the ostensible reason for quitting Surbiton. The damp air rising from the river didn't suit him.

Town suited her, as she expressed it, "down to the ground," and following in Mrs. Reade's wake, she became one of the immense crowd of smartly-gowned nobodies, who, always talking as if they were somebodies, throng fashionable shops, cycle in the Park, and subscribe to Kensington Town Hall dances. It was far away from the days when she lived in lodgings at Teddington, made her own clothes, and cooked her own dinner.

Now she kept four maids, whom she was constantly changing. West seldom found the door opened by the same girl thrice.

Nettie

Nettie was an exacting mistress, and had no indulgence for the class from which presumably she had sprung. Her servants were expected to show the perfection of angels, the capacity for work of machines, and the servility of slaves. And she was always detecting imperfections, laziness, or covert impertinence of manner or speech. Every six weeks or so there was a domestic crisis, and Mary or Jane left in tears, and without a character.

West could generally guess from the expression of Jane's or Mary's face how long she had been in Astwood Place. Disappointment, harassment, and sullen discontent were the stages through which each new comer passed before reaching the tearful catastrophe.

From the serene appearance of the young person who to-day let him in, West judged she was but recently arrived. "Mrs. Catterson was out," for which he was not sorry; but "the Master was at home," which he had expected, having heard in the City that Catterson had not been at his office for some days.

He found him huddled up over the drawing-room fire, spreading out his thin hands to the blaze. Half lost in the depths of the armchair, sitting with rounded shoulders and sunken head, he seemed rather some little shrunk sexagenarian than a man still under thirty.

Gladys, with a picture-book open on her knee, sat on a stool against the fender. She did not move as West came in, but raising her eyes considered him, as was her wont, with a steadfast neutrality.

Catterson, turning, jumped up to greet him with something of his old buoyancy of manner; but the change which a few weeks had made in his face gave West a fresh shock. Nor could he disguise it sufficiently quickly—the painful impression.

"You

"You think I'm looking ill, eh?" asserted Catterson, but with an eagerness which pleaded for a denial.

West lied instantly and heartily, but Catterson was not taken in.

"You think it's all U P with me, I see," he said, returning to the chair, and his former attitude of dejection.

This was so exaggerated a statement of his thoughts that West tried absolute candour.

"I don't think you're looking very fit," he said; "but what you want is change. This dark, damp, beastly weather plays the deuce with us all. You should run down to Brighton for a few days. A man was telling me only last night that Brighton all this week has been just a blaze of sunshine."

"Oh, Brighton!" Catterson repeated, hopelessly, "I'm past that." With the finger-tip of one hand he kept probing and pressing the back of the other as it lay open upon his knee, searching for symptoms of the disease he most dreaded.

To change the channel of his thoughts, West turned to the little girl who still mutely envisaged him.

"Well, Gladys, have you forgotten, as usual, who I am?"

"No, I haven't . . . you're Mithter Wetht," she told him, the piping drawl now complicated by a lisp, due to the fact that she had lost all her front teeth.

"Where's Sonny?" he asked her. "I've got something for him," and he put the packet of sweets down on the table by his elbow.

She reflected a moment as to who Sonny might be; then, "Thyril's a naughty boy," she said. "He'th had a good . . . whipping . . . and hath been put to bed."

"Oh poor old chap!" West exclaimed, ruefully, "and on his birthday too. What has he done?"

But Gladys only repeated, "He'th a . . . very . . . naughty boy,"

boy," in tones of dogmatic conviction. She seemed to detect the guest's sympathy with the culprit, and to resent it.

Voices and laughter were heard on the stairs. Nettie entered in her bonnet and furs, preceded by a big, overdressed woman, whom West easily identified as Mrs. Reade. They had been shopping, and both were laden with small, draper's parcels.

Nettie did not seem pleased to find the drawing-room occupied. She gave West a limp hand without looking at him, which was one of her exasperating habits when put out, and then she attacked her husband for keeping up so big a fire. The heat of the room was intolerable, she said; it was enough to make any one ill. She threw off her wraps with an exaggeration of relief, peevishly altered the position of a chair which West had pushed aside inadvertently, and began to move about the room, in the search, as he knew well, of some fresh grievance. Catterson followed her for a second or two with tragic eyes. Then he turned to the fire again. "To me it seems very cold," he murmured; "I've not been warm all day."

Mrs. Reade declared he should take to "byking." That would warm him; there was nothing in the world like it. "Indeed unless it maims you for life, it cures every evil that flesh is heir to."

"But I suppose the chances are in favour of the maiming?" West asked her.

She laughed hilariously at this, and though she was certainly vulgar, as Catterson had complained, West couldn't help liking her. He always did like the women who laughed at his little jokes; (Mrs. Catterson never laughed at them). Besides, she was so obviously healthy and good-natured; handsome too, although you saw that in a few years, she would become too fat.

Nettie wondered why on earth Jack couldn't have had tea ready,

ready, pulled violently at the bell, and began to examine some patterns of silk she had brought home with her for the selection of an evening gown. Her lap was presently filled with little oblong pieces of black and coloured brocades.

"The green is exquisite, isn't it, Mimi?" she appealed to her friend, "but do you think it would suit me? Wouldn't it make me look too pale? The heliotrope is sweet too, but then I had a gown last year almost that very shade. People would say I had only had it cleaned or turned. Perhaps, after all, I had better have black? I've not had a black frock for a long time, and it's always so smart-looking, isn't it?"

Mrs. Reade thought that in Nettie's place she should choose the green, and have it made up with myrtle velvet and cream guipure. An animated discussion of dressmaking details began, during which the men sat, perforce, silent.

Gladys, meanwhile, had come over to the table on which the chocolates lay, where she stood, industriously picking open the paper.

Catterson presently caught sight of this.

"Gladys!" he exclaimed, with the sharp irritability of ill-health.

She had just popped a fat bon-bon into her mouth, and she remained petrified for a moment by so unaccustomed a thing as a rebuke. Then for convenience sake, she took the sweet out again in her thumb and finger, and burst into sobs of anger and surprise.

Nettie was equally surprised and angry. "What are you thinking of, Jack, frightening the poor child by shouting at her like that?"

"But did you see what she was doing, my dear, meddling with West's property?"

"Mr. West

"Mr. West shouldn't leave his sweets about on the table if he doesn't want the child to have them. Naturally, she thought they were for her."

"Not at all. She knew they were for Cyril. She heard West say so."

"After Cyril's behaviour to me this morning I certainly shall not allow him to have them. And I don't approve of sweets anyway. It ruins the children's teeth. I wish Mr. West wouldn't bring them so often."

This was sufficiently ungracious, and West's answer was sufficiently foolish; "Perhaps you wish I wouldn't bring myself so often either?" said he.

"I've no doubt we could manage to get on just as well without you," she retorted, and there were worlds of insult concentrated in the tone.

The only effectual answer would have been immediate departure, but consideration for Catterson held West hesitant. It is always because of their affection for the husband that the wife finds it so particularly easy, and perhaps so agreeable, to insult his friends. She offers them their choice between perpetual banishment and chunks of humble-pie.

Catterson put an end to the situation himself.

"Let's get away out of this, West," he said, with flushed cheeks and shaking voice, "come down to my study."

Here, the change of atmosphere brought on a fit of coughing, to which West listened with a *serrement de cœur*. In his mind's eye he saw Catterson again, vividly, as he had been a few years back; very gay and light-hearted, full of pranks and tricks. Always restless, always talking, always in tip-top spirits; when he fell in love, finding expression for the emotion in the whistling and singing of appropriate love-ditties, the music-hall love-ditties of the day.

The

The foolish refrain of one of these recurred to West, ding-dong, pertinaciously at his ear :—

“They know me well at the County Bank,
Cash is better than fame or rank,
Then hey go lucky ! I’ll marry me ducky,
The Belle of the Rose and Crown.”

And now Catterson, with pinched features, sunken eyes, and contracted chest, sat there pouring out a flood of bitterness against himself, life, and the gods for the granting of his prayer.

“You remember Nettie before I married her ? Did she not appear the gentlest, the sweetest, the most docile girl in the world ? Who would ever have imagined she could have learned to bully her husband and insult his friends like this ?

“But the moment her position was assured she changed ; changed completely. Why, look here, West, the very day we were married—you remember we went down to Brighton, and were married there—as we walked back along the King’s Road, she stopped me before a shop and said, ‘ You can just come in here and buy me some furs. Now I’m your wife you needn’t suppose I’m going through another winter in my wretched, little, old coat of last year.’ It was her tone ; the implication of what she had had to endure at my hands, before she had the right to command me. It was the first lifting of the veil on her true character.

“Perhaps if I had never married her—who knows ? Women require to be kept under, to be afraid of you, to live in a condition of insecurity ; to know their good fortune is dependent on their good conduct.

“I did the right thing ? Yes, . . . but we are told, be not righteous overmuch ; and there are some virtues which dig their own graves.”

He

He spoke in a disconnected manner ; but his domestic misery was the string which threaded the different beads. Of West's interjected sympathy and well-meant efforts to turn his thoughts he took no heed.

" 'Marriage is the metamorphosis of women.' Where did I read that lately ? It's odd ; but everything I now read relates to marriage. In every book I take up I find an emphatic warning against it. Why couldn't these have come in my way sooner ? Why couldn't some one tell me ? " Marriage is the metamorphosis of women—the Circe wand which changes back all these smiling, gentle, tractable, little girls into their true forms.

" Oh, but after all, you say ? . . . No, my wife does none of those things ; but she has made my life miserable, miserable . . . and that's enough for me. And if I were to try and explain how she does it, I daresay you would only laugh at me. For there's nothing tragic in the process. It's the thousand pin-pricks of daily life, the little oppositions, the little perversities, the faint sneers. At first you let them slip off again almost indifferently, but the slightest blow repeated upon the same place a thousand times draws blood at last.

" No, she doesn't care for me, and sometimes I almost think she hates the boy. Poor boy . . . it seems monstrous, incredible ; but I've caught her looking at him with a hardness, a coldness. . . . "

He sat silent, looking wistfully away into space. West traced the beginning of a pleasanter train of ideas in the relaxed corners of his mouth, in the brightening of his sunken eyes.

" He's the dearest little chap, West ! And so clever ! Do you know, I believe he'll have the most extraordinarily logical and mathematical mind. He has begun to meditate already over what seems to him the arbitrariness of names. He wanted to know the
other

other day, for instance, how a table had come to be called a table, why it wasn't called a chair, or anything else you like. And this morning, when we were talking, he and I, over the present I had given him, he posed me this problem: Supposing two horses harnessed to a cart were galloping with it, just as fast as ever they could go, how much faster could ten horses gallop with it? Shows he thinks, eh? Not bad for a child of four?"

He began to forecast Cyril's career; he would put his name down at Harrow, because to Harrow he could get out to see him every week. He should have the advantages of Oxford or Cambridge, which Catterson had not had. He should enter one of the liberal professions, the Bar for choice.

And then his face clouded over again.

"But he shall never marry. He shall do anything else in life he pleases: but he shall never marry. For it's no matter how well a man may be born, it's no matter how fortunate he may be in life, if he's unfortunate in his marriage. And it seems to me, that one way or another, marriage spells ruin."

He was back again in the unhappy present, and West felt his heart wrung. Yet there was no help to be given, no consolation possible. The one door of deliverance which stood open, was the one door which Catterson could not face, although his reluctant feet drew nearer to it every day.

But West had already observed that when life becomes impossible, when a man's strength is inadequate to the burdens imposed upon it, when the good he may yet accomplish is outweighed by the evils he may have to endure, then the door opens, the invisible hand beckons him through, and we know no further of his fate.

Though Catterson could not face it, and with an ominous spot burning on either cheek, tried to reabsorb himself again in plans for the future, West saw in it the only possible escape, and told himself

himself it was better, even though it proved an eternal sleep, than what he daily had to endure.

The wife's cold heart, her little cruelties, her little meannesses, all her narrowness, her emptiness of mind rose before him. What a hell upon earth to have to live in daily companionship with her, even if unrelated to her in any way! But for her husband she was the constant living reminder of his dead illusions. He could not look at her without seeing the poor, thin ghosts of his lost youth, of his shattered faith, hope, and happiness, gathered round her. Every indifference of hers, every neglect, must call up the memory of some warm protestation, of some dear attention in the past. And these were less hard to bear than the knowledge that those had never been genuine.

It is life as you anticipated it, brought still fresh and palpitating into contrast with the bleak reality, which is so intolerably hard to bear.

The contemplation of Catterson's position became so painful to West, that he felt he must get away even at the cost of brutality. He gave warmly the asked for assurance to come again soon, and knew in his heart as he uttered it, that he would not soon find the courage to return.

In the hall he looked about him mechanically; then let slip a hot and vigorous word on discovering he had left his hat up in the drawing-room and must go back.

The tea-table now stood by Nettie's elbow. She insisted that he should take a cup of tea, pressing it on him as a sort of peace-offering, so that without actual rudeness he could not refuse. She was again gracious as far as she knew how to be. Possibly Mrs. Reade, who studied the suavities of life, had been remonstrating with her.

Gladys lay on the hearthrug, her face in her hands, her elbows
planted

planted on the open book. The packet of sweets in a very knock-kneed and depleted condition stood beside her. She sucked a chocolate in her cheek, had kicked off her shoes, and drummed with her black-stockinged feet upon the floor.

West made a pretence of drinking his tea, but it was tepid, it was weak, and Nettie had put sugar into it without enquiring his tastes.

She and Mimi Reade were still discussing the patterns of the brocade.

"I do think the green perfectly sweet, Mimi," she repeated, holding the scrap up at arm's length, so that the lamplight might slant over it; "and yet the black is a softer, richer silk, and would make up awfully well with jet trimmings, as you say. I don't know which I had better have."

The two women turned and returned the problem, considered it again in all its bearings. They appeared to have forgotten West, which was but natural, he had sat silent for so long. To himself, his brain seemed mesmerised by the vapidty of their talk, so that an imbecile point of interest grew up within it, as to which colour, eventually, Nettie would choose.

Meanwhile the study door opened, and Catterson's cough, which carried such poignant suggestion to West, was heard again upon the stairs. It seemed to speak suggestively to Nettie too.

"After all," she said in her curious, drawling voice, "it would be more prudent I suppose to decide on the black."

